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MY OLD LETTERS.

οἷς δ' ὁ γέρων μετέησιν, ἅμα πρόσσω καὶ ὀπίσσω
λεύσσει, ὅπως ὅχ' ἄριστα μετ' ἀμφοτέροισι γένηται.

ILIAD, Book III. 109.



MY OLD LETTERS

BY

HORATIUS ^{vv} BONAR, D.D.

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Nos tecta fovebimus ossa
Violis et fronde frequenti :
Titulumque et frigida saxa
Liquido spargemus odore.
PRUDENTIUS.

*Not written down in haste, but in the quiet
Of thoughtful seasons, still to memory dear,
When the whole soul was calm, and the world's riot,
Even in its echo, came not to my ear ;
What I have thought, and felt, and seen, and heard is here.*

*Sometimes the cloud, but oft the happier noonlight
Floated above me, as I mused and sung :
At times the stars, at times the mellow moonlight
Gave ripeness to the fruit of pen and tongue,
While o'er my ravelled dreams the years and ages hung.*

*In days of public strife, when, sharp and stinging,
The angry words went daily to and fro,
Friend against friend the polished missiles flinging,
Each seeking who could launch the keenest blow,
I went to thee, my harp, and bade thy numbers flow.*

*In hours of heaviness thy solace seeking,
I took thee up and woke the trembling tone
Of the deep melody within thee, speaking
Like the heart-broken thrush, that sits alone,
Mourning its spoiled nest and all its nestlings gone.*

*Into these pages peace-thoughts weave their brightness ;
The peace that has been, is, and is to be,
Is here ; peace-blossoms in their tranquil whiteness
I've shaken, as I passed from tree to tree,
Relics of many a strange and broken history.*

*Lie there, my pen ! Only a little longer,
And then thy work shall be for ever done ;
Death in these pulses daily groweth stronger ;
Life's ruby drops are oozing one by one ;
The dreams that flowed thro' thee shall soon be dreamed alone !*

*Rest kindly now, beside what thou hast written :
Let that a little longer linger here ;
By age unwithered, and by time unsmitten,
True leaves of health, that never can grow sere,
From the great tree of life, plant of a purer sphere !*

*Thou art the lute with which I sang my sadness,
When sadness like a cloud begirt my way ;
Thou art the harp whose strings gave out my gladness,
When burst the sunshine of a happier day,
Resting upon my soul with sweet and silent ray.*

*The sickle thou with which I have been reaping
My great life-harvest here on earth ; and now
'Mid these my sheaves I lay me down unweeping,—
Nay, full of joy, in life's still evening-glow,
And wipe the reaper's sweat from this toil-furrowed brow.*

*From this right hand its cunning is departing,
This wrinkled palm proclaims its work is done :
Look back, fond reaper, to thy place of starting,—
Days, months, and years, a lifetime past and gone ;—
Say, which is best, thy rising or thy setting sun ?*

*I may not stay. These hills that smile around me
Are full of music, and its happy glow
Beckons me upward ; all that here has bound me
Seems now dissolving ; daily I outgrow
The chains and drags of earth. I rise, I go, I go !*

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MY OLD LETTERS.

B O O K I.

LIKE the November leaves they lie around me,
In broken heaps, or spread out one by one ;
Older or newer, in their varied forms,
Memorials of a spring too quickly past :
Each leaf the relic of a well-known tree,
Now bare, or vanished from the forest crowd,
Of which it was in other Mays the king.

The sun of yesterday has set for ever,
The beacon-gleam across the wave is quenched,
The sparkle of last midnight's torch is gone,
The footprints on the sand are all erased,
The snow has melted from the rock, the dew
Has at the dawn dissolved : all these are things
That go, and come not back again to us.

Far more abiding are these time-stained pages,
Dumb, and yet eloquent in every line ;
Old love and faith making the faded fresh,
And lights of other years still beaming there,
Unblanched and tender as when first they shone.

Half-folded, disarranged, they lie ; yet each

Distinct with a deep history of its own.
Like the ancestral portraits on the wall,
Or names engraven on the granite plinth,
Or golden locket which enshrines the love
Of loving years and hearts, they alter not
With the caprice of time or fickle seasons ;
Dead, yet alive, retaining in their folds
Perpetual vigour and perennial youth.
Not like the pressure of now clay-cold fingers,
Nor like the dream of faces seen no more ;
Nor echoes of dear footsteps passing by,
Nor songs once heard from voices long since mute ;—
Theirs is a yesterday that changes not,
Except to ripen and grow mellow still ;
Theirs is a register of soul, which shall
Remain unblotted, perfect as at first,
Till he who reads them now shall close his eyes,
And lay down thankfully his wearied head
Upon the pillow of the restful earth.

They tell that oft, when the old walls are down,
And their foundations flung upon the moor,
Evanishing amid the ebb of ages ;
When every stone of the paternal hall
Has crumbled, and commingled with the soil ;
When the rough elm, first planted ages since
On the heir's wedding-day, or shining beech
That lined the avenue or graced the lawn,
Has fallen, the old garden-flowers are found
Springing unbidden from the faithful earth,
True to the soil, the season, and the sun ;
While here and there a moss-wrapt relic grey

Of ancient orchard, not without its fruit,
Spreads wide its boughs to the bland August breeze.

They say that in some spots (I know them well,
The quiet slope, the glen, the purple moor),
Where martyrs died, or holy men once met
Under the watchful sky to worship God,
Sounds sweet as heaven are heard in sunny hours
(When the year's round recalls the faded past),
Rising like fragrance from the sod, as if
The soil had drunk the notes of holier days,
And loved at times to give them out again,
Sweetened with age, rich with unearthly peace.
Such are to me these fragments of green years,
These pages that give out, each time I touch them,
The unchanged melodies locked up within ;
Still full of noon, and noon-day life, though they
Who wrote them long have left us for the tomb.

Each letter, with its wonted signature,
The seal and date, and place of dear abode,
The street, the city, or the rural home,
Takes the soul back to unforgotten scenes,
To hopes and fears of the calm long ago,
Features and friendships of more radiant days,
The dreams and passions of the swelling soul,
Voices once warm and eloquent, now dumb.
The rocks o'er which the breakers went and came,
The valley with its stream, the beckoning hill
Which oft we climbed together, or the room
In which we sat with some lost friend or child
A shrub, a flower, a tree beneath whose shade
We lay in summer as we talked and read ;

A book, a thought, a sorrow, or a joy,
A jest, an argument, a dreamy tale ;
A death, a birth, a wedding, or a tomb,
A parting or a meeting ; or a stroll
Of love or friendship, when one soul pours out
Into another all its busy dreams,
Gazing upon the sea, or wondering stars,
Or gold-begotten clouds of royal morn,
Or earth-enamoured moon, that smiles in love
Upon a scene that answers smile for smile:—
These are the things which, graven deep on each
Pale line, bring back whole worlds of history.

They who made up our life are dying daily,
Yet the life-current of the world flows on,
And we have but to wander by its edge,
And gather up the relics flung ashore.
We are all orphans ; every leaf that falls
But addeth to the orphanage of earth ;
And as each yesterday breaks off, and joins
The past, we feel our being less complete.

In every line,—some clear as at the first,
Like the new-carved inscription, others like
Grey tombstones with their half-worn epitaphs,—
I feel the throbbing of a kindred heart
That beats no more ; I recognise the flash
Of eyes now closed ; I clasp the hand that once
Clasped mine and pledged immortal constancy,
As if it never could relax its grasp,
Or lose the warmth with which it folded mine.

Looking at these mute relics of the spring,—
My spring and theirs whom love had knit to me,

Preserved like pearls from robber or decay,—
Turning their withered pages o'er and o'er,
I seem to sit upon a cliff of echoes,
Round which float up from the still vales below
Or woods beyond, all voices and all sounds
Of melody and speech, of harp and tongue ;
The music of a lifetime garnered there :
Some the first breathings of a clinging heart,
Some the last syllables of love, as if,
Stretched to its full, the last string broke in twain
With the low note that ended the last song.

More in the garden grows than what is sown ;
Not weeds alone, but flowers come up unbidden,
Sown by the careful winds. So here I mark
Not the parched petal, but the vital seed ;
For each word dropping from the lip or pen
Of man or woman is a seed that dies not,
Wafted afar, to spring we know not where.

O loving winds, that bear such seeds as these
Into my garden, and there lay them down
To be a lifetime's sweetness, in which all
The hoarded essence of the past I find ;
To be to me, in this the gentle twilight
And silence of these now retreating years,
Like the night-blooming flower, that only spreads
Its beauty and its odour to the stars.

And all the months are here ; true waymarks, not
Linked only with old seasons and old suns,
But with the changes of a human heart :
Here are life's hues, its marvellous mosaic,
The rough and smooth of mortal history.

Capricious April with its clouds is here,
Scattering its daffodils, or showering down
Daisies like silver rain to stud the fields :
May with its forest-buds and orchard-bloom :
June with its length of fervent day, all light,
All incense : July taking on the tinge
Of chastened calm, as if the hastening year
Had passed its noon ; maturer sunshine now
Kindly dispensing, when the ripe rich air
Breathes o'er the burnished corn, by day and night,
Pouring its magic wealth into each blade
Of swelling grain, and bidding harvest haste
To the embrace of the impatient sickle :
Dear August, month of sunny memories,
Of idle wanderings by the welcome sea,
Of reveries by rock and waterfall ;
Its fields of white, with the lark's chant above,
The reaper's song below at joyous dawn ;
Its school-boy holidays of liberty,
Its shadowy mountains blazing to the top
With the full-blossomed heath : October brown,
Type of the worn-out year, disrobing earth
For her dark wintry sleep : November dull,
Fickle as April, with its falling stars,
Seeming as if the torches of the heavens,
In preparation for the coming dark,
Were shaken, that they might shine freshly out
With keener brilliance thro' the crystal air :
Austere December, sternly laying down
Its bed of ice and coverlet of snow,
For the o'er-weary earth, till spring return.

We bear with winter, for it has its sweets ;
But never long for it, and always sigh
For the green spring-life, and the summer-breath,
The months of resurrection and of song.
Go, Winter, go, we say, and let the snowdrops,
Like buried stars, burst up ; the primroses,
Fair daughters of the forest and the shade,
Wave their pale golden coronets around ;
The leafless almond-bloom invite the bee
To taste its new-born nectar, virgin-pure ;
The willow-buds by the glad watercourse
Swell into rounded freshness ; in the wood
The wind-flower woo the breeze it loves so well.

They go and come again, these months of change,
But they who made them what they were come not :
The casket is the same, the gem is fled ;
The chalice sparkles, but the wine is drained ;
The sky endureth, but the stars have left.
Graves far and near are all that now remain,
And Memory, taking up each cherished name,
Hides it securely in her holiest urn.

Strange is the life of others seen by us
Onlooking quietly, as from the shore
Appears the silent ship in the dim offing,
Passing us by we know not whither bound.
More strange the life now gone, of which we once
Formed part, but which long since has quitted us ;
Outstripping us and moving out of sight
On the broad deep, or at our very side,
In some tempestuous midnight, going down
With its large freightage 'neath the surge of time.

Strange, too, our own lives, giving forth each hour
Their mysteries of motion or of rest.
But yesterday my heart could not be still
For joy ; the throbbing sunshine shook it all ;
The very air was trembling with the light.
To-day that heart refuses to be calm
For grief, which as a tempest seizes me,
And sweeps me on like cloud of night that has
No anchor, and no pilot, and no helm.

And in these letters all this life of mine,
Mirrored in lives of others, rises up.
My perplexed being is unriddled here,
And I begin to understand myself,
Tho' shrinking from the mirror held up thus ;
I see what once I was, what now I am,
And many a mystery becometh clear.
I see the path, the thicket, and the goal,
The folly that I chose, the truth I shunned ;
The error, and the evil, and the light,
The prison-house and the deliverance ;
The half-fought battle and the vile defeat,
Yet sometimes, too, the noble victory ;
The spoken or unspoken thought of sin ;
The hasty word, uttered and then recalled,
The angry tone when yet the speech was gentle ;
The weariness and the reviving strength,
The low despair and the rekindling hope ;
The fearless faith or dark uncertainty ;
The tangled hours of this mis-shadowed life
Becoming clear and eloquent as day ;
The brave confronting with the jealous gale,

And then the gliding into the still haven.
These read I here in all these many lives,
Woven into one, like rich embroidery
Upon some antique hanging. In these scrolls
I recognize the interpreters of days
And doings in which lie the feeble germs
Of unenfolded being, just preparing
To start upon the everlasting race,
Begun down here, to be completed yonder
In the fair realm from whose blue battlements
The stars look down upon us in their love.

A mother's love is ever in its spring,
It knows no frost ; with true Peneian verdure
All over green, unseared by age or clime.
A mother's letters, broken tho' they be,
And brief perhaps, yet, like the mellow fruit
Of a perpetual autumn, daily yield
Their unexhausted sweetness, and impart
Strength in the hours of feebleness and doubt.
A sister's arm, like a white silken cord,
Stronger than iron chain, and like asbestos
Proof against fire, folds round our boyhood's life,
Infusing tenderness, yet giving strength ;
Smoothing the rough, and into harmony,
By its soft touch, as by a spell from heaven,
Bringing the youthful discords of the heart.
A sister's letters, best of chronicles,
Like faithful sun-prints, give us back ourselves,
Recording the fond household's history
Of undivided fellowship and love,

Till death or distance snapped the holy chain ;—
The bitters and the sweets, the heights and hollows,
The meetings and the partings, the mishap
Ending in mirth, the deeper ill in tears ;
Loquacious joy that cannot hold its peace,
Mute sorrow, yet more eloquent than joy.
And from these shreds of other days floats up
The fragrance of the venerable life,
In midst of which we grew to manhood's prime,
Becoming thus what now we are, the sons
Of the past age and fathers of the future.

Their touch has calmness in it, and the fire
That breathed in some has died out with the years ;
The warmth remains, but the fierce blaze has sunk ;
And when the ruffled spirit seeks repose
Or soothing in the midst of weary frets,
It turns to these ; and as it turns, the storm
Smooths into stillness, and each chafing wave
Obeys the charm. However far I go,
These scrolls recall me to old love and rest.
I hear dead voices saying, Wander not !
Return ! I cannot but comply ; I come,—
Won by the spell of unforgotten tones,
That still retain their heart-controlling power,
And, like Ulysses, wander back to home.

Oh my own Ithaca, my home, my home !
(Spake he not thus, the wanderer of the isles ?)
Where the child rose into the boy, the boy
Into the man, with sunshine all about him !
Oh my own Ithaca, my home, my home !
Barren it may be, but oh, beautiful

Beyond all other islands of the wave !
In thoughts and dreams I turn to thee ; but thou
Canst never be to me what once thou wert.
All changed art thou, and they, the loved and loving
Who made thee what thou wert, have left thy shore.

Neither in life nor death are we alone ;
We cannot isolate our being from
That of our fellows, more than can the stars
Unlace their mingled radiance. The great race
Is one, each age and clime together clasped,
And each man, like each ocean-drop, or more
Or less affecting all his fellows round.
In ways we know not, and at points of which
We dream not, daily we on all are telling.
We cast a shadow as we pass along,
Unthinkingly, or give out silent light,
Dispensing joy or sorrow, ill or good,
From that occult and passive influence
Which man breathes out on man unconsciously.
The turret-clock in the great city's depths,
That strikes the dreaded or the welcome hour,
Knows not what bitterness or joy it brings
With the resounding stroke, that, like a knell,
Enters some trembling ear, and breaks the heart,
Or, like a flash from heaven, lights up the soul ;
Yet none the less it does its certain work.
The balance knows not whether lead or gold
Is laid upon it, just alike to all.
The book, each page inanimate and mute,
Cares not who reads it, nor can understand
The tears or smiles that thickly fall upon it,

The peace or trouble which its words provoke.
The silent clouds above us feed the springs
Which swell into the mighty streams on which
Earth's cities rise, and by which they are fed.
We may be but the cloud ; it matters not,
So be it that we fill our place, and do
Our work on earth until earth's work is done.
That doing is no sport ; done well or ill,
It is no dream, but tells on all around ;
And no man from his fellow ever can
Shake himself wholly free on any side,
Present or future, or for good or ill :
Our fathers mould us, and we mould our sons.
So work these pages their unconscious work ;
They know not what they say to him who cons them,
Like tree unwitting of the fruit it bears.

What are they doing who have passed the bourne ?
They whom we loved so well, and lost long since,—
What are they feeling ? Do they love as once
They loved when here ? We still are passing thro'
A life of tempest ; are they in the calm ?
Are the unsettled interests of time,
That swayed them to and fro with fear and hope,
Absorbed in the eternal settlement ?
And the disharmonies of misyoked life
All sweetened into happy unison ?
Is the remorseless roughness of the road
Once trod, when side by side we walked below,
Now sweetly levelled ? Is all pain unknown,
And heaviness and heartache and unrest ?
Is darkness now submerged in tranquil light

Poured from no earthly sun? Are wounds all healed,
Hot passions soothed to rest, deep blanks re-filled?
And disappointments that o'ershadowed life
As with one dense eclipse, are they forgotten
In the redeeming sweetness of that love
Which is itself the very heaven of heavens?

They have passed on before, at height of day
Outstripping us, yet beckoning us to come.
Above us now the once sense-fettered soul
Roams in the liberty of ripened being,
Without a burden and without a chain.
These pages tell me what they did and felt;
But what they now are, I must learn elsewhere:
Earth's records are for earth, and of the things
Of earth alone can tell. For that which is
Within the screen, I must consult with those
Whose eyes have seen afar, whose ears have heard
The songs that celebrate eternal peace.
Dear as these pages are, they but record
A few faint beatings of some human hearts
Amid the fevers and the frosts of life.

The history of suns long set is here;
Pictures of skies o'er which the sudden cloud
Of tempest in a moment rolled; the dreams
Of treasure-laden barques that never came;
Of stars that never rose; of radiant flowers
That never blossomed; of pellucid founts
That never saw the sunshine, nor poured forth
Their hidden sparkles to the kindly morn;
Of angel forms, which in these later days
(Oh, sad for man to be denied such guests!)

Have ceased to visit our forsaken earth.
Here are the waymarks of a mistaught mind,
The fitful footprints of a faltering life ;
The driftwood flung amid the rocks, and left
Beyond the tide-line and the surge, on this
The foreshore of th' immeasurable main
That men and angels call eternity.

Here, too, I find mild gleams of cheerful light,
The episodes of grave and graceful being,
Of life in sunshine,—voyages across
A land-locked sea, on which the scourging wind
Can lay no hold, o'er which the luminous sail
Glides with invisible motion, like the planets
Over the upper azure, unalarmed ;
The episodes of wise and earnest life,
Filled up with words that live and deeds that tell ;
The life of noble growth, in which to-day
Is yesterday's apt scholar, and to-morrow,
The docile, pensive pupil of to-day ;
The meek life, into which the scalding words
Of human passion have not found their way,
But which the cooling notes of heavenly love
Pervade in all its parts, and saturate
The air with genial music, till the peace
Spreads out on all sides, like the widening ripple
Of the still lake, touched by the swallow's wing.

Strange scraps of life are here, like pages torn
At random from some volume of the past ;
Fragments of being, not without a meaning.
As the split rock shows where the lightning struck,
As the torn flag shows what the banner was,

As the old song recalls some noble name,
Or the worn coin an empire's history ;
So each of these frail symbols links itself
With man's whole circle, asking us to solve
The riddle of an immortality
Whose twisted coil was to itself a chaos ;
For our own lives are little understood,
Even by ourselves. That mazy labyrinth
We call existence ; that pure mystery
By us named soul ; that silent rudder-power
Which we term will ; that sacred lamp, the mind ;
That marvellous aurora of the dark
Which we style fancy ; that sweet morning dew
Which we call love ;—these in their several parts
And acts are all enigmas, to be read
By light not of this sky, by subtlety
Transcending that of man's keen intellect ;
And what we know not now we then shall know,
When from the heights of the eternal hills
We shall look back on time, interpreting
Old dreams, unravelling the tangled network
Of life, and knowing even as we are known.

All after-thoughts belong to man, with all
The doubts that hang around us here ; to God
Pertains the eternal forethought, and pure light
That knows no shadow of a shade : to Him
All space, all time, are ever, ever clear ;
Himself the present, and Himself the future,
Himself the first and last, the ALL IN ALL.
High souls are here, that rose on mighty wing
Above the multitude and found a name,

Not soon to drop from earth's large history ;
Some brave in perilous action, other some
Braver in perilous endurance ; some
Are here whose steps were peace, whose eyes were light ;
Some with a chequered sky of cloud and blue,
Like northern summers, sad with many a storm ;
Some pressing on with silent earnestness,
Calm, yet without the brilliant glow of sunshine ;
Others, life-weary men, who, sick at heart,
And crossed in hope, found not which way to look,
Or into what safe port of peace to turn
From the cross-currents of a blustering age ;
Some light of heart and free, but other some
Steeped in earth's bitter absinthe, and made drunk
With wine of sorrow ; some that swept thro' earth
Like torches thro' the desert night ; and some
Hidden from sight, yet from their secret nooks
Telling like violets on the general air ;
Some much with men, a few much with themselves ;
And others much with God, from Him receiving
The power supernal by which men are moved,
The force divine, which, like electric fire,
Goes out resistless, tho' unseen, to do
Its work of goodness against all things evil,
Its work of life against the strength of death.

Some names are here, on whose dark tombs I gaze
As on extinct volcanoes, burning once
With wasting fire that scorched where'er it came ;
Who might have loved, and healed, and comforted,
But never loved, nor healed, nor comforted.
Theirs were but names of wonder, and no more :

The gentle charities of happy being,
The wayside flowers of mild and suave life,
That shed their genial softness thro' the soul,
Grew not within a circle such as theirs.
Their paths of sullen, self-willed wandering
Skirted the blighted heath or splintered cliff;
They sought the echo of the cataract,
Or flowerless ruggedness of ocean's strand.
In them the human heart seemed ever beating
In lawless pulses; swift and stormy now,
As if its channels would give way; again,
Too slow for life, as if congealed within.

Some here I find whose placid course was all
A voyage of pleasure o'er an inland lake,
Studded with islands and girt round with green,
Over whose sunny crystal tempests breathe not;
Others whose life, vexed with time's wasting strife,
Seemed like a strong sail, riddled with the shot
Of life-long battle, into pieces falling.—
And yet I find that, even in some of these,
Defeat, altho' disaster, was not shame.

Ah me! the affections of this life grow old,
And die like spring-buds in the pinching wind!
Love, even the deepest, cannot last: at morn,
'Tis fair as light; ere even, exhaled like dew,
Or like a rainbow buried in the cloud
From which it rose, and upon which it hung.
The dearest tie that ever knit two hearts
(Each like the other as two budding roses)
Snaps, and the loved one passes out of sight;
The brightest eyes are fading, and their sparkle

Is vanishing amid the mortal mist
That wraps this globe and darkens earthly homes.
Yet, 'mid the ruins of the human heart,
I sit me down and sing the song of hope,
The song of the rebuilding and the joy.

Most of earth's history has passed away,
Like the spring torrents of Arabian sands,
Which leave behind no record of their flow ;
Yet doubt I not that it is written somewhere,
To be brought forth, and speak the buried truth
Contained within all things which God has made,
Or man has done, however small and poor.
Nothing is lost, tho' what becomes of all
The light, the force, the motion that for ages
Have flowed, reflowed, crossed, and recrossed the vastness
Of boundless space, we know not, save but this,
That thus the fabric of the universe
Is woven into its endless perfectness,
And wrought into the stedfast harmony
For which all things above, below, are ripening,
Unfolding purposes we understand not.
And such old letters are the seeds of what
Shall one day, in new resurrection-power,
Arise to tell of all that once has been
Spoken or done or felt beneath the sun.

The story of this earth is one of shipwreck,—
Of parted anchors and of sunken hulls,
Torn sails, lost helms, and buried argosies,
O'er which the unfurrowed sky still bends unmoved,
And for which man has long since ceased to mourn.
The good goes down, the evil floats above :

'Tis not the face of ocean, but its floor
That holds the gems of time ; its precious things
Are far beyond the search of human eye.
Rude Scythia 'neath her black unhammered rocks
Buries the emerald ; the chalcedony
Hard by the dark Symplegades hides deep
Its yellow splendour ; man is wandering o'er
A city of the dead, some lost Pompeii,
Whose ruins and whose riches and whose life
Lie heaped together in one hopeless tomb.

That Book of heaven, the gift of Him whose thoughts
Are only truth, is but the epitome
Of one whose range is both eternities.
We turn its leaves, and note in each with awe
The unlikeness to all words of man,—the abrupt
Yet steady flow throughout the ages past ;
Its breaks and links, its chaste variety,
Yet its mysterious and unstudied oneness.
The symbols that have marked the ages past,
And done true pilot-service to the world,—
The buds of truth which throughout every land
Have burst and ripened, are all here ; and here
The under-showings of the coming life,
Of full-developed beauty, are contained.
The pens of many lands and times are here ;
Yet are they one in thought and theme and word,
One in authority of speech to man,
And one in superhuman tone ; most like,
In unity and wide immensity,
The tessellated firmament aloft,

Made up of rainbows, clouds, and stars and blue.
Instinct in each bright line with subtle force,
Charged with creative fire from heaven itself,
It quickens the cold eye and palsied hand,
Making the mute lips eloquent that read,
And purging earthly grossness from the soul.
The deeds with which the world has sowed its fields
When earth was younger, and from which have come
Harvests in later years of noble goodness ;
By whose meek influence the laws and hearts
Of nations have been moulded, here are written,
Selected and arranged by Him who gave
To earth its seasons, to the sea its tides,
To the lone river its melodious rhythm,
To the uplifted hills their lofty awe,
And to the universe its majesty ;
No random page and no unmeaning line.

Not upon fiction, but on truth alone
The immortality within is fed.
Not fable, but a history divine,
Human yet superhuman, everywhere
Unearthly but of earth, and steeped in love
Higher than man's or woman's, can provide
The anodyne of pain, the quickening food
For the world's famine, or replenishment
For the deep void of the unsolaced heart,
That yearns in silence for the great and true,
To fill its vastness and to cheer its gloom.

That mighty Book of heaven ! what has it not
Done for a careworn world, whose very smiles
Bear witness to the void within ? Its truths

Have sounded thro' the ever-echoing earth,
And filled the air with joy. It has taught men
How to pluck life from the abyss of death ;
How to look down into the tomb, and see
Not bones and dust, but incorruption there ;
How to drink deep the cup of bitterness,
Yet find in every drop immortal health ;
How to endure the long sharp throb of pain,
And yet give thanks to Him who kindly sent it ;
How to gaze up into the cheerless heavens,
When the red bolt is splintering the rock,
And read the love unquenchable of Him
Who out of midnight brings the dazzling day ;
How to peer down into the desolate depths
Of ocean, and discover in that gloom
The arm that reaches far below these depths,
And lifts the sunken victim from the wave ;
How, when alone amid a hostile world,
To look up and to see the placid sky
Filled with the weaponed hosts of light, sent down
To win for us the eternal victory.

The thoughts that have been torches to the
world,

Self-luminous, like Israel's pillar-cloud,—
Which have gone up and down the passive globe
Like angels, and have found a resting-place
In every clime, have issued from this source ;
The verities of word and deed, which wait
The expansion of the ages, all are here.
Tho' undeveloped, and unrecognised
By human unbelief, they yet shall fill

All being, reaching the remotest parts
Of time and space, God's two infinities.

The song that has redeemed the commonplace
Of ages or of schools is written here,—
The word that from the gates of Paradise
Went forth and took possession of earth's altars,
In visible symbol laid upon the turf,
Type of the life for life, the death for death,
Is graven here with an eternal pen ;
The seed-words of the ages all are here,
Gems dropped from heaven, and sparkling in the gloom
Or twilight of this error-shaded earth.

The truths that from the tree of Golgotha
Went forth and took the world by storm, like hosts
Mighty in war, yet without shield or sword,
Lodge here, as in some royal citadel,
Ready for deeds of might in day of battle,
Or happy service in the hour of peace.
In slow procession, with no battle-cry
Or sound of trumpet, calmly march they forth
From gates of Old Jerusalem, to overflow
The ages, cover realms, seize Gentile thrones,
Defying the dread gods of Greece and Rome,
Cumæan or Dodonian oracles,
And subtle strength of stern philosophy,
The wisdom of the Porch or the Lycæum.
They have gone forth to conquer ; and they have
O'errun this populous globe, crossed seas and straits,
Desert and swamp and mountain, in their march ;
Peopled all isles and continents and realms,
Pervaded cities with their new-born spell,

Paphos and Corinth, Athens, Ephesus.
The idol-fanes they seized, expelled their gods
(As with the scourge of cords the lowly One
Drove from the temple of all temples once
The merchants and the merchandise of old),
Leaving to perish, with a sure decay,
Tripods and altars, images and garlands.
They scourged the priesthood out, in whose dark rites
The untrue and the impure of ancient ages
Had taken refuge and become incarnate,
By whom gross things were beautified, to win
Man's love and worship, to build up for him
A fond religion of the fair ideal,
The Syrian goddess or the Delian god,—
Each statue a symbolic lust, encradled
In virgin marble or in bronze enthroned :
The flowers of the pure earth, the forest leaves,
The dells, the mossy caves, and waterfalls,
Rocks, rivers, and the unpolluted sea,
The dewy mountains, sky, sun, moon, and stars,
All linked with human passion, and debased
From their sweet pureness, to become the haunts
Of fabled deities, whose worshippers
Knelt at the shrine of gods more vile than men.

Humanity's uplifted eyes say, Who
And what is God ? Where, how can He be found ?
Is He on earth in temples made with hands,
Amid these solemn mountains, or within
That ocean swaying to and fro, as if instinct
With life beyond itself ? Or is He far
Beyond the vision of mortality ?

Humanity's outstretchèd hands cry out,
'Show us the Father, and it will suffice !'
'Who, who will show us any good ?' has been
And still is everywhere the bitter moan
Of empty, aching hearts, that feel far down
The loneliness of being left without
One greater than themselves to fill the largeness
Of such a soul as has been made to love,
And take in love such as its greatness craves.
'Show us the Father, and it will suffice !'
Is the sore cry of human hearts that came
To this bright world for joy, but found it not.
That cry God answers, pointing to yon babe,—
The babe of poverty, despised of man,
That lay in weakness on a woman's knee,
And sucked a woman's breast,—to yonder man
That walked in sadness this unloving earth,
Doing the mighty deeds of heavenly grace,
And speaking words such as man never spake ;
That hung in shame upon yon cross, and lay
Within yon stony tomb, then rose again,
And went on high to unbar the gate of day
To us, the wanderers of the night below.

O manger-cradle ! what to thee we owe,
Where the first footsteps of descending God
Printed themselves on this unconscious earth !
O tree of death, to us the tree of life,
Whose fruit is immortality and joy,
Let us sit down beneath thy laden boughs
And pluck thy mellowness, to famished souls
Sweeter by far than Israel's angel-bread.

O rocky tomb, the three days' prison-house
Of Him, the Mighty, whom no bars could bind,
Prince of both life and death, we joy to find
Thee empty now, the only tomb of earth
Without a guest, thee empty evermore!

He who doubts nothing, nothing knows : so runs
The proverb. Yet to doubt is not to know ;
To know is not to doubt : true knowledge is
Deliverance from doubt, and from the bondage
Which chains the doubter ; he who winneth this
Is nobly blest ; for all uncertainty
Is heaviness of spirit, and a load
By far too grievous to be borne.—A creed
Sent down from Him who is the only Wise
Is the true ending of all human doubt,
The one foundation of all certainty,
The end of mental bondage, the beginning
Of freedom to the conscience and the soul.
That which is certain can alone set free ;
It is uncertainty that makes us bondsmen,
Or else possession of a cherished lie,
Clenching the fetters of the mind ; truth only,
Not guessed at, nor half-proved, but coming down
Like light from the supernal Light of light,
Sets free and makes the spirit walk erect ;
Not like Enceladus, by Etna crushed,
Nor like Prometheus, prisoned on his rock ;
But like the buoyant eagle, soaring high,
Free and disburdened, to the upper heaven.

The birth of error is without a throe ;
The travail-pangs of truth are terrible,

Convulsing nations in their agony.
Evil comes in, all smiles and holiday,
With harlot-purple decked, and mimic gems,
The sound of trumpet heralding her march ;
But good, amid the tempest and the strife,
Hard struggling into life and hope, its path
Oft lighted by the fires of martyrdom.
'Tis sown in weakness, it is raised in power ;
It dies to live, and roots itself in ashes.

So be it: out of sickness cometh health ;
Out of morn's tempest comes eve's golden calm ;
The dawn is the dear offspring of the night ;
And like a mother dying as she gives
Birth to a noble son, so dies the darkness
As she brings forth her fair-haired man-child Day.

Let us be sowers, yet be reapers too.
In speaking we are sowers of the seed,
In listening we are reapers of the harvest.
Sow well and reap well ; spring and harvest are
Twin brothers, though all summer comes between.
He who knows most and best speaks least, and with
The fewest words in speaking, but the fool
Talks golden hours away ; and yet a fool
Is sometimes right, a wise man sometimes wrong.

Let not the currents of the age prevail
To sweep you from your stable anchorage ;
Seek to be still, amid the noise and heat
Of streets and crowds, and strife of angry men, '
Whose voices are but passion and revenge.
'Tis the calm voice that conquers ; violence
Of pen or lip but weakens argument,

Wounding the truth by its own advocate.
Go, master thine own will, be king within
Thyself ; so shalt thou rule o'er other wills.
'Tis not hard force that best can baffle force,
And mock the blow. See that fierce thunderbolt !
It strikes the tower, and the big stones are splintered ;
It strikes the cliff, the rock is cloven in twain ;
It strikes the sea, and sinks in baffled might :
The soft wave calmly quenches its quick fire.

Fret not for news ; they will come soon enough
If ill ; if good, they can afford to wait :
Or good or ill, they will ere long grow old,
And like ripe fruit will drop into thy hand.
Be patient, keep your spirit still, for storms
Are all about you, and you cannot say,
Even to the lightest of them, Peace, be still.
The skilful pilot can control the barque,
But not the breeze ; the rock defies the gale,
Unmoved, but cannot soothe it into calm.

'Better to be the hammer than the anvil,'
They said of old. So said not He who came
In heavenly charity to bear our griefs,
And to endure the life-long taunts of men,
Who hated goodness for its own sweet sake.
Better to bear than to inflict the wound !
He who requites must be divinely just,
And He who taketh vengeance must be love.
Better to be the anvil than the hammer.
Fear not the blow ; the patient anvil shrinks not,
Nor dreads the hammer : let it strike without
A pause, it wears or shivers but itself.

Be not ashamed of truth, however old,
Nor think the newest is perforce the best.
The orchard's aged trees do often shame
The new and young. I know it has been said,
Past waters turn no mills ; but yet, again,
I do bethink me of a truer proverb :
Respect the fountain of whose waters thou
And all thy sires have drunk. Truth never sheds
Its leaves, nor fears the winter ; on its head
No grey hairs ever come. The ancestry
Of wisdom is eternal and divine.
Judge truth not by its garb, but by itself :
Not by the scabbard, but the blade, we prove
The authentic sword ; so by its inward worth
We rate the truth ; so by the life within,
Shining thro' many a veil, we know the man,
Not by his dwelling or his costly robe.
Look not upon the cup, but upon that
Which it contains ; the cup itself is nought.

All precious things are rare, not to be bought
As merchandise, bestowed by God alone.
One in ten thousand has the dower of beauty,
And who can bargain for that perilous dower ?
One in ten thousand has the gift of song,
And who can buy that lip or lyre divine ?
Not one of twice ten thousand has possessed
The double heritage of song and beauty.
God knoweth how to give and to withhold :
His common stars He scatters o'er the night,
His brightest gem He keepeth for the morn.
Rise, orb of silver ! 'tis to thee we turn,

Stealing in sweetness up the jewelled blue,—
Not for thyself, but for the news thou bringest
Of something fairer than thyself. Oh, shine,
And lead us to the land beyond thyself,
The region of an everlasting sun !
Gem of the Orient, whose splendour rests
Upon a thousand hills, a thousand seas,
We hail thee as the earnest of the noon ;
And having found thee, we set forth to seek
The diamond mine from which thy brilliance came.
Thou, but a spark struck from the chariot-wheel
Of dawn, as issuing from the heavenly gate,
Biddest us look and wait for what is coming.
This is the age of stars ; the age of suns
Is on its way ; we know that it will come.

One voice from all these varied pages sounds,
More true than ancient oracle ere spoke :
Seize the one moment for the moment's work,
Or failure must be thine ! To-morrow's sun
Lights up no yesterdays ; the broken bridge
Yieldeth no passage to the traveller ;
The swerving arrow winneth not the prize ;
The ship that has so often come and gone
Makes its last voyage, and goes down. In vain
We mourn the past, or strive to gather up
Lost sunshine, or replace the vanished rainbow.
Lost gold may be recovered ; severed love
Be re-cemented, friendships knit again
In double strength, that one cold word had sundered ;
The straying arrow may return unblunted
To the unfaithful bow that played it false ;

But the lost moment perishes for ever,
Like pearl flung out into the deep, beyond
The fathom-line or reach of diver's hand.

This is the day of motion ; history
Fast and yet faster moveth : but all motion
Is not advancement. Thought is now adrift,
And who shall anchor it or hold the helm ?
The anchored barques are tugging at their chains,
And the unanchored are all out upon
A sea of tumult, striking each the other.—
Slow,—and yet slower ! for I hear afar
The sound of the fog-signals.—Slower yet !
The air is thick, and peril on all sides
Warns us to watch and keep the helm in hand
The years are wiser than the days ; let us
Be still and wait ; the mist will rise ere long.

Meanwhile in silence the recumbent earth
Moves on, unconscious of the hurricane,
Round its old self, and round the constant sun,
Impelled by laws it knows not, yet obeys.
So let us glide upon our tranquil path,
Unswerving, with our eye upon the goal,
And in obedience to a law which sweetly
Draweth us onward, yet in doing so
Keeps us unshaken,—says to us, Be still !

I look with awe upon the stedfast past,
So unrecallable and motionless,
And yet so full of all that once was life,
And warmth, and motion ; like an iceberg vast,
Its million drops all frozen into one ;
Or like a mighty continent, filled up

With the debris of ages, there it lies
Behind me in its greatness ; and as I
Move on and on, it closes quick behind,
And shuts its gates against me ; yet I feel
Its awful shadow cast upon my present.
As I stretch out my hand to touch it, all
Is cold and unresponsive, yet I can
Pluck from its silent wastes the withered flowers
Of days that have stolen past in soundless haste ;
And I can gaze upon its dim low hills,
Beyond revisiting, left far behind.

The future cometh, rolling in its waves
With all their burdens, eager to land its freight
On the firm shore, and to become the past.
I see it coming, billow upon billow.
And what these far-off crests convey to us,
Of evil or of good, I know not ; soon
They will roll in upon the welcome strand,
And all that heaving future, with its warmth
And change and waywardness, lie still and cold.

The fire that purifies the gold must first
Dissolve the ore ; the soil that vivifies
The seed must first become its tomb ; each part
And atom of this globe is passing thro'
The potter's hands, and will ere long give up
The secrets of its being, the great thoughts
With which creation travails, bringing forth
The eternal perfect from the imperfect past.
Linked with the changes which make up the days
Of that which we call time, each fragment has
A marvellous story of itself to tell :

Child of the ages past, it says, am I,
For out of all of them have I come forth ;
Part of them all am I ; their history
Is mine, and mine is theirs ; their spirit rests
Upon me, and hath made me what I am.
Child of the ages yet to come am I,
They are my heritage ; to-morrow's sun
May or may not arise upon me here,
But somewhere and somehow I know to-morrow
Will yet be mine, as yesterday hath been.

We know no rapture here without its chill ;
No song but dies and leaves the asking ear
Unsatisfied ; no day without its fall ;
The lustre of the undiluted light,
Meek and unchangeable, is only known
In the far region of unwrinkled skies.
For life and death are woven into each other :
The day of the untwining comes apace ;
We know it, and lift up our head in joy.

Faith walks in night, yet is not of the night ;
And Hope, her fellow, looks into the east,
Where, marking the long cloud-bars all of gold,
It says, ere day is up, Behold the sun !

BOOK II.

‘AT noon, when day was all awake, and light,
Mother of day, had breathed her ample life
O’er the dead face of earth, I sat amid
The monoliths of old Phœnicia’s shrine,
On sunny Malta’s sea-embosomed rock,
And thought of ancient altars, broken gods’
(So read I here in this old page of friendship).

‘Once, too, at eve, ere twilight had come down,
When the ripe sunshine dropped o’er land and sea,
Like yellow fruit in autumn, I went out
Amid the pillared groups of marble ruin
Strewed o’er Italia’s western shores, that seem
Like lonely graveyards of its buried gods.
My musings went to ages past ; of all
That these bleached fragments once had seen, I thought.

‘And then again, at the mute hour of midnight,
When ocean lay at rest in sleep and smiles,
And the moon woke, to watch the bright repose,
Scattering its silver o’er the wave like dreams,
I stood on Sidon’s crumbling fort, and looked
All round and up the slopes of Lebanon,
Where to Astartè rose the tainted incense,
And Syria knelt before her goddess-moon.

‘The temples of earth’s younger days have fallen ;
The idol-plain of Shinar is a waste ;
The colonnades of Baalbec, that for ages
Like a palm-forest stood, uprooted lie ;
The columns whitening the green hills of Greece
Have crumbled ; perished Rome’s four hundred fanes :
The sea of ages has swept over them ;
Beneath its waves dead gods and goddesses
Lie deep entombed,—no one to quicken them,
Or to relight their long-quenched altar-fires.

‘And yet I hear of pilgrims in these days,
These wiser days of spirit and of truth,
Who do them reverence ; who go to kneel,
And weep, and love, and worship, waking up
With pagan litanies the agèd silence,
Pining for deities long since extinct,
In which, impersonate, they seem to see
What man calls nature, and to which he kneels,
Clasping the idol in his wild embrace
As if it were the real, or than the real
More lovable and worthy of his faith ;
As if in that ideal he had found
The very spirit of this marvellous seen,
And yet more marvellous unseen, to which,
Fondly enamoured, he would wed his soul ;
To which, enraptured, he would bow the knee,
As to a goddess-bride, in whose warm eyes
He would rejoice to find his dreamy heaven.

‘O youth-hood of the world, earth’s May-day prime,
To which so many wistful eyes look back,
How little of the pure and lovable

Perfumes your ancient air, or finds its way
Into the sunshine of your burning blue !
What have your molten or your chiselled myths
Done for the realms who owned them as their creed ?
How little of the noble or the great
Has dwelt within the columns of your fanes,
Or blazed upon your altars ! War and wine
Were there, with lewdness and with cruelty ;
Each symbol pander to a lust, or based
Upon a lie, or some contorted fragment
Of truth primeval, all defaced and worn.
Fierce and lascivious were the fumes which filled
The chambers of your vast unwindowed shrines ;
Your marble, Parian or Pentelican,
Blushed at the rites it witnessed ; and your men,
Oft nobler than the creeds they clung to, looked
With scorn on wanton deities, who seemed
To visit earth but to defile its pureness
With lewdness of their own voluptuous heavens.

‘O era of the gods ! ere Bel had bowed,
And Nebo gone into captivity ;
When Egypt worshipped still her nameless Power ;
Ere yet Ibsambûl was laid desolate,
Her idols smothered in the Nubian sands,
And her rock-chiselled niches stripped and spoiled ;
Ere Elam’s ever-burning fire went out,
Or Lebanon forgot her Ashtaroth,
Or Zeus and Herè, from the Olympian peaks,
Had passed into their kindred nothingness :
Era of myth and mystery, how blank
For truth and goodness have your ages been !

Ye fabled deities, what have you done
To sweeten or dry up the turbid flood
Of terrene ill? Ah! never have ye gone
Down to the solemn depths of human conscience,
To calm the tempest that was raging there;
No burdens have ye borne, no wrinkles smoothed
Upon the furrowed front of earthly care;
Dumb as your statues, and as cold, no words
To the lone mourner have ye ever spoken,
No counsels to the wandering have ye given,
No guidance to the error-tangled step,
No blanks ye filled, no terrors ye allayed;
Upon the future ye could shed no hope;
Upon no deathbed did ye ever shine,
Making the leaden lip to smile with peace,
And lighting up with love the heavy eye.
Rest for the weary ye had none; no love,
Like that of Him who gave His Son for us,
Ere spake from you by priest or oracle;
No cradle-lullaby ye ever sang,
No mother's tears ye dried; ye could not say
To your own Niobè in day of grief,
"Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes
From tears, for soon thy children shall return;"
Ye could but change her into stone! No hope ye gave
Of happy meeting and immortal love
On a bright shore of life, to which no death
Shall come, and o'er whose field of peaceful light
No star malignant shall shoot down its ray.
No earnest gave ye of a glorious future
For man and for man's earth, long desolate,

Compensating for disappointment here.
Poor helpless gods, what have ye done for men,
Even in these days when all the world was yours,
Days of humanity's unwasted prime ?
What stamp of love or pureness have ye left
Upon that earth o'er which so long ye swayed ?
When did ye dare the battle-front for truth,
Or face the flame in fighting error down ?
Has the grave yielded to your icy touch,
Or death fled trembling from your sightless eyes ?
Which of you all has spoken words that live,
Or done the deeds that tell, or moulded minds
Into celestial beauty, lifting man
Above the sensual thought and selfish will ?'

So writes the meditative pen of one
Whose pleasant fellowship has passed away.
His youth to many seemed made up of dreams ;
To those who knew him 'twas one burning thought,
One passionate purpose, so to live this life
That earth should be the better for his birth,
And own him as a son she loved to honour.

It was a noble dream ; and he who dreamed it
Woke up to noble life, and lived it well.
He said,—nor did he speak amiss to us,—
'Think of what one day thou shalt be, and try
To be to-day what thou shalt one day be.
Fight on and conquer ; be a power on earth
Long after thou art gone ; live for all ages.
Live wisdom, and then speak it ; it will tell :
The wise words of the wisest sometimes seem
But folly to the foolish. Not the less

They work their destined work invincibly ;
Then most a power when man esteems them weakness.
The fragrant oil-drops from the wrestler's hair,
When gathered Greece had crowned him conqueror,
Fell not in vain, but left the odour long,
Breathing a power upon the multitude
That quickened them to deeds of worth and greatness.
He whose good name is lost, is dead and buried ;
But he whose life, however brief, hath spoken,
Tho' but the lowest, least articulate tones
Of blessing to his fellows, never dies.

‘ How strong the ties of kindred and long love,
How dear the intercourse of heart with heart ;
Sunny or sorrowful, as each sweet day
Draws out still more of that which is within !
Man wishes to be loved,—expects to be so ;
And yet how few live so as to be loved !
Each to the other says, “ Come, love me,” yet
Who among thousands lives the lovable,
Heart-winning life ? ’Tis love that winneth love :
Words are too often mockers ; gentle deeds
Knit souls together, fusing into one
Divided thoughts and hopes, and fears and joys.
He that would win me must himself be won :
I know no loving save by being loved ;
For being loved, we love. Such is the law
Alike of earth and heaven ; for Him we love
Who loved us first ; His love engenders ours.

‘ Be sure your shaft is fixed before you draw
The bow ; then draw, and stint not ; take thine aim.
Live thou no random life, as if to play

Some time-beguiling game thou camest here,
Or take thy part in the world's brilliant dance,
And then depart when the bright crowd breaks up,
The music quenched and the gay waltzers gone.'

I read and muse, I muse and read again,
Conversing with the dear or honoured dead.
These letters are the voices of the loved ;
And thus may life and death hold intercourse,
Tho' not by eye or ear or touch, or some
Ethereal medium, which man may not name
Except in darkness. For to us they come not ;
We go to them : we meet them where we oft
Have met before ; we go into the past,
To walk and sit beside them as of old.
What they are now is hidden from our eye ;
What they once were we know, and into that
We would each day return, and wander through
The fields where we so oft have been with them,
On double wing of memory and love,
Rejoining those whose lives and ours were once
But one, and whose departure took away
Part of ourselves, and left yet more of them
Behind, deep-treasured, for companionship,
Hour after hour, to us in silent days
Of blankness and of solitude, till this
Strong memory shall lose its strength to name
The names of love, or until we rejoin
Those who have thus outrun us in the race
Of time, and reached, long before us, the goal.

Out of the eater has come forth the meat,

And from the strong one sweetness ; so to me
Has the devourer of all mundane things,
The greatneses and meannesses of man,
Left those few shreds behind him, as he swept
Still on and on in his destructive march,
Locked up in double safe, like hoarded gold,
These treasured pages of the loved and lost,
These self-sketched portraits of their inner being,
Fragments of once familiar history.

In the great picture-gallery of Time,
Each child of earth, tho' all unchronicled,
And unrelated to the wise or high,
Has some fond niche or shaded corner, where
He finds some image, which no time can blot,
Of those who have gone from him, and whose going
Left his poor dwelling poorer, and himself
A lonelier man, whose props and fellowships,
Once fallen to pieces, could not be replaced.
For few are the replacements of the heart ;
That which is gone is gone, and no one else
Can fit into the hollow death has made,
Or fill up the unmeasured blank within.

Quickly the lacerated air is healed,
The bolt that pierced it left no scar behind.
Heart-wounds are only cicatrized to many ;
The life-long scar shows where the arrow struck,
The life-long pain betrays the hidden hurt.
Quickly the sea fills up the hollow where
The barque went down, and all again is smooth ;
But in that greater sea, the human heart,
Shipwreck is shipwreck beyond hope or fear ;

The old fulness comes not, and can never come.
Swiftly the sky of noon resumes its joy
When storms exhaust themselves, and clouds have passed;
But that far wider heaven, man's boundless soul,
Detains the shadow when the cloud has fled ;
And in the human hemisphere, the star
Once lost is lost for ever, till the hour
Of glad recovery for all true things lost,
When every stain shall vanish from the blue
Of our fair life hereafter, and the lights,
Which went out from our firmament, shall be
Rekindled there in freshness far beyond
What eye hath seen in this thick air of time.

The scar remains ; the pain, with most, is past ;
Few suffer long ; the many fling aside
Their sharpest grief ; within a few short months,
Or less, the past is past, the sea is still.—
Oh, well for them, and yet not well ! I'd rather
Endure the open wound a lifetime, than
Part with the memories of these earnest days,
When I sat face to face with death, and then
Kissed the last farewell, clasped the marble fingers,
And saw the soul forsake beloved eyes.

On such departed radiances I muse,
Still beautiful in their primeval youth ;
And musing, take up one by one these pages,—
Soiled with long years, and torn by heedless hands,—
In which old life comes back again, like corn
Spilled from the shaken sheaf upon the ground,
Or like the scatterings of storied glass,
From dim church window, falling to decay.

Brief episodes of home and love and peace,
With glimpses of the unforgotten scenes,
Faces, and names of boyhood, all are here :
The quiet, or the boisterous overflow
Of hearts as yet untamed to manhood's rules,
The first up-wellings of youth's sparkling spring,
The wild exuberance of the vagrant will
When first let loose upon a world of smiles,
Are written, tho' in broken characters,
By pens long since laid down. Strange pages these,
O'er which my eye runs swiftly, as I watch
These sinking stars and this uprising sun,
That thro' my lattice now begins to pour
Its brilliance in this solemn summer dawn.

Heaped on this table, in disorder mute,—
Type of the ravelled coil of memories
Within myself,—a lifetime's memories,—
They lie, and bid me listen to their song.

And I am listening ! Not a sound but has
Its charms, which distance has no power to dull;
For time but breathes its harmonizing spell
O'er what was once untunable and harsh,
Transforming into venerable softness
Words which, when uttered first, perchance were rude ;
Making even silence eloquent ; the sweet
Still sweetening ; the waves of stormy life
Smoothing into a stable calm, o'er which
No hurricane again shall ever break.

They say that when the Alpine peak is split
By frost or lightning, or by grinding time,
The gems roll out into the vales below,

Making the peasant rich with unbought treasure :
Even so life's once deep-buried memories
Uncover all their lustre to the soul,
Making me richer than I thought or dreamed,
When time or storm or the sharp frosts of life
Have severed them from the encrusting mass
Of present scenes and soul-absorbing cares,
Which buried them in darkness far within.

Before me passes, disarranged yet clear,
The vision of man's threescore years and ten ;
Each day containing in itself a tale
Told for all ages, and each week a volume ;
All of them fragments, broken off by time
From this immortal being, and laid up
As in a treasure-house, or skilfully
Embalmed, like Egypt's dead, with spices sweet ;
Not lost, like vapour vanishing in air,
Or inurned ashes of a Roman pyre ;
Not flung aside as waste, but linked with noons
And nights of our imperishable past,—
Parts of one being, zones of one round earth,
Fields of one province, yet in light and shade
Each differing from the other, none the same ;
For true life ever varies and is fresh :
'Tis fancy only that repeats itself,
Still giving forth a stale monotony
Of human fictions, substituted for
Divine creations ever rich and new ;
Some like plucked flowers, whose fragrance lingers yet
When the full hues are gone ; some like the flowers
Whose beauty lingers when the fragrance dies.

As at the keyboard sits the organist,
And, touching key by key, draws out the store
Of melody within, or old or new,
Till from the organ-pipes the massive notes
Roll out like living gems, so sit I here ;
And as I touch these fragile finger-keys,
These scrolls in which a parent or a friend,
Brother or sister, spoke out all their heart,
The unexhausted music of the past
Comes out, and fills the ever-listening soul
With solemn sweetnesss that never pall.

Into these byways of the sombre past
We track our way with charts and guides like those
Which these old letters furnish, and sit down
Amid the crumbling towers, the grass-paved streets,
The shattered obelisks of life, once fresh
In its own radiant prime, as one who walks
Amid the rock-shrines of old Thebes, or gazes
On Syria's pillared wrecks, or corridors
Of proud Sebustè on her hill of vines ;
Or yet more truly, as one strolling out
Along the Appian Way, and wandering on,
Finds on each side, half-buried and half-razed,
The villa and the tomb of Roman days.

Amid the thickets of the past we seem
At times to lose ourselves, yet there we love,
As we grow older, oftener still to be
Than in the present ; for to haunts like these
The famished soul goes back for nourishment
And comfort in its day of weariness.
The then and now, how different ! And we,

Unlike our former selves in taste and feeling !

Then, it was with the living all the day

We lived ; thoughts, hopes, and dreams were all with
them.

Youth looked at everything with summer eyes,

And then it seemed that not a leaf could curl,

Or blossom drop upon the greedy soil.

Few memories had we, and they were sweet ;

Our past was brief, our future great and fair.

Now, with the dead it is we converse hold ;

Our fellowships are on the other side

Of the lone grave, in which so many loves

And joys lie buried deep. Life seems to us

Like an old city now, with shattered walls,

And broken gateways, 'neath whose arches once

Youth marched in glee, with its gay banners spread,

To each day's goal of triumph and of song.

O bright processions of the past ! No time

Can blot you from our memories ! O mirth

Of boyhood, when the slippery mountain-slope,

Hot with all July flaming on its rocks,

Or shaggy with September's brownest fern,

Welcomed our buoyant steps, as up we climbed

Cliff above cliff ; or when the lavish sun

Shook down its autumn gold upon the sea,

Along whose glowing lip we roamed in joy.

The one-book student is not always wise,

The untravelled spirit is not often wide ;

The reader of the false becomes himself

False as the books he reads. Light cometh not

To him who loves the dark. Let us spread out

Our souls among the many and the true,
Or books or lives, that we may be as they,
In life and thought alike large-souled and wise ;
Not cast in one stiff mould, but wide and free ;
Wide as the widest truth, and free as day
In the pure stretch of its unmeasured sunshine,
Owning no bound save that which God has set.
Our vision's limit should be, not the clouds
Of earth, but the wide heaven, or wider still,
The circle of immeasurable space,
Into whose calmness of unfathomed distance
Some trembling star, all but invisible
In the far offing, beckons our slow eyes.
Whence the truth comes, or how, we need not care :
Be it but truth, 'tis welcome. What lips spoke,
What fingers penned it, heed not. Is it true ?
Let it come in, then, and abide with us.
Blessèd the roof that kindly gives it shelter !
Ask not the good man's pedigree ; he may
Be without name or title, poor in all
That the proud world calls noble in descent,
Yet may his ancestry and heritage
Be old and heavenly. Take him for what he is,
Think not of what he is not ; it may be
Thou shalt receive an angel unawares.

It is the tiller of the ground that keeps
The world in life, and makes it what it is.
Poor as he may be, from his daily sweat
The wealth of nations springs, and his rough hands
Wield sceptres, steer our navies, and command
Our armies, sign our treaties, make our laws,

Sheathe or unsheathe the sword, to overthrow
Or reconstruct the empires of the earth.
And yet who thinks of him, or knows his name,
Or asks his pedigree? The hard and sore
But useful work that tells upon the world
Is done by unknown men, who find no fame,
Yet without whom the men of name and honour
That fill the untrue annals of our race
Would all have lived in vain. The great ones die,
And the wide nations weep; fair monuments
Arise in every city. Those obscure,
Hard-toiling men, whose eyes grew early dim,
Die and are buried where their fathers lie;
The crowd moves on above them, and the world,
Noisy and ignorant, and mad with lust
Of gold, knows not how poor it has become.

No one has seen to-morrow, and from it
No lessons come. It may be full of wisdom,
Yet, till it comes, the wisdom cannot come.
All have seen yesterday, and out of it
And its long fellow-yesterdays which we
Have known, the lofty light and knowledge rise.
Say what men will, antiquity is power;
The light of long-set suns is gleaming still
Upon the furrows of its awful peaks.
Call it the youth of time, as some have done,
Yet they who dwelt in it were men of thought
As well as we, and men of mellow minds,
Who had outgrown their nonage, and could speak
As only they can do whom time has taught.

The pyramids are Egypt's, but to all

The world belong the everlasting hills.
Children of time are we ; its stores are ours,
The centuries are ours which have flowed out,
Drop after drop, since man was on the earth.
Both good and ill, both true and false are there,
Yet are they not like drops which in an hour
Exhale and leave no vestige of their being,
But rather like the stars, which one by one
Come forth and shine for ever, or with good
Or evil influence on each following age ;
Or like the deep-stored mines, whose precious ore
Has been depositing itself for ages,
To be the unexhausted wealth of kingdoms.
Ours must it be to treasure up the gold
And fling the dross away ; to separate
The shadow from the substance, and to dig
In every mine of the long-buried past ;
To glean with eager and impartial hand
In every field where truth has found a home.
He who is bound to learn is bound to teach,
The Jewish fathers said ; and it is well.
Let us, then, daily learn, that we may teach ;
And let us daily teach, that we may learn.

Yet 'tis but little of earth's history
That bears recording ; greater part by far
Fit for oblivion : for one flowery nook,
Miles of rank weeds ; for one shining gem,
Long fields of dross. I look behind, and see
The dark deposits of the centuries,
The strata of the ages, as they flowed
And ebbed, precipitating, deep and foul,

Layer upon layer of human sin, spread out
In loathsome crust upon this passive earth.

Fountain of light ! this confused world of ours
Is full of mist and peril everywhere ;
Wilt Thou not send the light for which it sighs ?
Radiance we ask beyond what man can give,
To turn our winter into spring and flowers.
Sunshine with all its splendour cannot loose
The bonds of frost : even so philosophy,
Highest and purest, shines, but shines in vain ;
It melts not, heals not, filleth up no void,
Nor breaks the iron chain, nor purges evil,
Nor makes the human spirit free and holy,
Possessor of a wingèd hope that goes
Above the peaks of these ambitious hills,
Beyond the sparkle of these lofty stars.

The sun is silent : it gives deeds not words
For blessing ; and no voice of eloquence
Or song comes from it ; day by day it pours
Its mute vitality o'er earth ; and yet
That soundless sunbeam, in its gentleness,
Is the great power for motion and for life,
The strength of strength, resistless in its stillness ;
Type of omnipotence, which silently
Rules heaven and earth. From that calm orb
above

Comes down the fruitfulness of vale and hill ;
It clothes the mountains with their tranquil green ;
The rivers have in it their lustrous source ;
The sky drinks in its sapphire, and the sea
Smiles in its smile ; the forests own its touch ;

It weaves the rainbow with its cunning hand,
A garland for the clouds, out of the dark
Evoking light and beauty. Ere man was,
It had prepared for him this fertile globe,
And stored its deepest regions with provision
For the great race that was to dwell on it,
The wealth, the fuel, and the fruitfulness ;
Its very rocks replete with hoarded light.
And He who, in His all-foreseeing love,
Set in the firmament that mighty sun,
Filled its benignant beams with life for man
And man's new world, the last and loveliest
Of the Creator's handiworks, whose soil
Was, in the fulness of the times, to be
The clay in which the eternal Son of God,
The Word made flesh, was yet to wrap Himself,
When He came down to live a human life
And die a human death, that life, not death,
Might be the heritage of sinning man.

O constant rain of God, which, day by day,
So mutely fallest on the eager earth,—
Not in cold showers, like that which men call rain,
But in unceasing tho' invisible drops,
Like a warm dew, both day and night distilling,—
Water this soul of mine ! O heavenly breeze,
Blow where thou listest, blow, invisible,
But not inaudible ! We hear the sound,
Yet know not whence it comes, or to what part
It goes,—all uncontrollable by man,
Mysterious in its motions, and obeying
In its strange rise and fall, its ebb and flow,

A law and will beyond man's will and law,
Yet not the less beneficent and real.
Blow, blessed breeze ! Descend, persuasive rain,
In fruitful fulness ! Hasten the long spring
And longer summer of this waiting world !
Full sorely does this day of varied ill,
That knoweth not its own infirmities,
Need all your fulness, double fount of life
Celestial ; for earth is out of course ;
Some universal solvent is at work,
And the old social fabric falls to pieces
Beneath its penetrating influence.
Destroy, disintegrate, and overthrow,—
This is the watchword of a restless time,
Which to rebuild and reconsolidate
Has not the will nor wisdom ; 'tis the age
Of the destroyer, not the architect.

Wake, sleeping seeds of all the ages past,
And send up thro' the soil that long has hid you,
Your blade and blossom ! Wake, and sleep no more !
We need you now ; awake, arise, and bloom,
Let loose your odours thro' the sighing air,
And turn its sighs to sweetness and to love.

There be four races of what men call flowers,—
Four families of beauty, that have been,
Or are, or yet shall be ; and all divine :
Flowers of a Paradise above, that ne'er
Has been or shall be lost, for ever fair,
For ever fragrant, in yon heaven of heavens ;
Flowers of a garden planted once on earth,
But blighted by the serpent's hateful slime ;

Flowers of a fallen soil, that might have been
One lovesome Eden, had no taint of sin,
Like shadow of an evil angel's wing,
Fallen on its budding beauty, shrivelling
Its noble youth into a quick decay ;
Flowers of a Paradise that has not yet
Been seen on earth, but one day shall be here,
And for whose coming we with hopeful heart
Wait amid all this death, expecting then
God's re-donation of His primal gift
To man, of His fair earth and gracious sky.

The sun is rising, and the nimble night
Hastes to be gone, as fleeing from his blaze,
With her affrighted host ; now beaming day
Is dawning thro' the night-long mists of time ;
The poisonous vapours of a tainted soil,
Where evil has so deeply struck its roots,
Are vanishing in incense ; discord dies,
And harmony, like heaven's, comes in its room ;
The long dark tunnel of the ages, filled
With sounds too sorrowful for angels' ears,
Thro' which we have been passing, endeth now,
And we emerge into a sun-bright noon.
God taketh His own time, and hasteth not :
His rest is motion, and His motion rest ;
He waiteth on His laws, they wait on Him.

But I am wandering from my briefs, and yet
Thoughts such as these come up as I recall
Events and scenes and names recorded there.
Things live again that seemed for ever dead ;

The graves of great men have immortal voices,
And even meaner tombs have much to say,
Would we but listen to their humbler words,—
Humbler, yet not less true and pure and noble.
The whole wide earth, and not one realm alone,
As the great Greek once said, is sepulchre
For noble men ; and yet the quiet tomb,
In the lone glen, of the more lowly good,
Without a monument or epitaph,
Invites the pilgrim's step and wins his soul.

Here fold I up my pages for an hour,
And walk abroad into the free blue air.
This is the shade of shades, no shadow like it,
Beneath the beech's over-bending boughs.
The ever-welling spring bursts blithely forth,
Drenching the long and pendent grass beneath ;
O'er us the noon-birds carol lovingly,
And the bee swings itself from bloom to bloom ;
Far through the shaken foliage gleams the lake,
Light on its clear broad brow. One page I take
Of these old scrolls, and read it as I sit
Or wander 'neath the shade ; and thus it speaks
Of the great works which solitary men
Have done for God, for country, and for earth.

' Right in the face of storm the lightning goes,
With its one fork of terror and of power,
Fronting, not fleeing from nor following,
The blast that levels woods and lifts the waves ;
Like a skilled warrior brandishing his sword,
And bringing down its edge upon some giant,

Hewing his way thro' power and bulk and fierceness ;
So let us with the sword of God-given truth,
Face foe on foe, as if to us alone
Were given the sword that is to save the world,
To sweep the spoiler from the earth, and win
The everlasting victory of time.

' See how the past gleams everywhere afar,
With single swords unsheathed and waved aloft,
When all around are scabbarded and rusting !
See how the deeds that make up history,
The works that tell on nations, have been done
By single arms and solitary souls !
See how the words that have rung thro' the eras,
Made kingdoms stand in awe, and carried health
To palsied peoples, making dead men live,
Have issued not from crowds, but lonely voices !
Not pomp, nor gold, nor numbers have been honoured
To do the works or speak the words of God.
'Tis the one master-wheel that moves the mill,
The rest do only what the master bids them.
The multitude may do the little things
Of hourly history ; the great are done
By lonely men, the Prophet or the Judge,
Who take their mission straight from Him whose word
They come to do ;—the prophet-child of Ramah,
Or he of Gilead in rough raiment clad,
Gideon or Jephthah, or the Maccabee
Of Modin, when, like giant from the hills
Of Dan descending, in his warrior-strength
He shivered the proud Syrian sword and shield,
And lifted fallen Israel from the dust.

‘ Thus, when God loves a people, and would save
A shipwrecked kingdom from the waves and rocks,
He for Himself creates some son of might,
And sends him forth with the delivering sword ;—
Some man, till then unknown, till then uncrowned,
From out the common crowd of citizens ;—
Some man of strength, like England’s yeoman, who
In evil days, when storm went thro’ the realm
And threatened universal shipwreck, took,
In the calm consciousness of power to rule,
The stroke-oar of the giddy reeling empire,
Steadied the barque, cheered the desponding crew,
And brought its creaking timbers to the strand,
To be refitted by the skill that saved it ;—
Some man of thought, like Bacon, rising up
In strength of chastened intellect and love,
Moulded and mellowed by the God-given truth,
To which he has submitted his large soul,
And in which he has steeped his varied being ;
He shines in darkness, and sends on his light
To after ages, setting free the mind
Of a great realm from bondage of the past,
Heading the storm, not yielding to the gale,
Speaking with thunder-voice, and yet with head
All reverently bowed before a voice
Mightier and more majestic than his own.
His words go thro’ the land, like arrows keen,
Feathered with lightning ; and they carry life,
Not death and wounds ; they fill the nation’s veins
With renovated health, the gift of Heaven.

‘ The lower millstone, tho’ it moveth not,

Grindeth as truly as the upper grinds.
Let us but know our place, our work, our time,
And all is well. It is the mis-timed life
That fails, and wastes itself in efforts vain,
Like ship without a pilot or a helm.

‘One in an age they rise and pass away ;
One in a nation they come forth and stand
Above their fellows, mighty men, but meek,
Noble, yet patient ; conscious of an errand
Which must be done, whoever may oppose ;
Big with an inspiration not of earth ;
Charged with a message to the sons of men,
Which must be spoken out before they die.

‘What will it be when all these sons of fame,
The peerage of the ages, shall sit down
Together, in a day that yet shall come,
And, welcoming each other, shall recount
The annals of their age, as they have known
And acted them, themselves its history ?
What will that feast-board be, and what that hall,
Where they who have obtained the good report
Shall meet together in one holy band,
And tell the tale of earth from the beginning,
Revealing all the hidden springs of thought
And speech and action to each other there ?

‘The stars have looked each other in the face
For ages, yet have never met ; the peaks
Of the far-severed and all-stedfast hills
Have, with their mitres of eternal snow,
Gazed on each other, yet remained apart.
The winds and waves and clouds embrace each other ;

Earth's universal network of clear streams
Is one sweet fellowship of many climes,
But stars and peaks remain unlinked and lone.

‘So is it now ; what it may be hereafter,
We know not : what the endless fellowships
And close-linked companies of bright and great
One day may be, we cannot tell ; nor yet
How soon, from the tall turret-clock of time,
Shall sound the signal which must gather all
The light-begotten children of the one
Great family of light, to the bright joy
Of the one festival which cannot end.’

Thus ends the page. I fold it up, and quit
The leafy shade, returning home ; and as
I go, I gather up the thought, and say,
Yes, it is even so ; but yet the veil
Before the patient future still remains.

All earthly things end in their opposites,
And to their opposites give silent birth :
Night ends in day, and day in night again ;
Life begets death, and death begetteth life.
All things revolve, and back into themselves
Return ; as the clouds fill the streams, the streams
The sea, the sea the clouds, all circling round.

As yet the age of constancy and progress
Lingers upon its way to us,—the day
When life shall rise into a nobler life,
And brightness shall give only place to that
Which is yet brighter ; when the daily flowers,
Instead of blanching, shall take on fresh hues,
And earth grow ever greener ; when the circle

Of joy and grief, which maketh up to man
His annual orbit here, shall be unknown ;
When sleep shall be a glorious trance, and dreams
All Bethel-visions ; when no wakeful night
With its alarms shall make the watcher say,
When shall this tossing weariness be gone ?
When all life's neutral tints shall flush into
The rich and brilliant hues of endless health,
When no dim future, no dark dread of change,
No fear of broken links and ended love,
And shadowy sick-bed and the greedy tomb,
Shall burden the bright hours of songful noon ;
When all shall be ascent, and still ascent,
One happy cycle of unchanging day ;
No settings more, save those by which the stars
Die in the sunlight and are lost in dawn.

BOOK III.



‘YES, of myself shall be my song to-day.’
Thus long since wrote the friend of other years,
Who, in the prime of promise and of joy,
Left us to win dear health in kindlier climes,
And to seek wider range of spirit where
New scenes and men call out new thought and feeling ;
Pitching his tent beneath less wayward skies,
’Mid breezes more benignant than his own :
Now in the classic East afar, to pluck
Ionian violets, sweetest of the sweet ;
Or by the rock of Hissarlik, to watch
How the flocks graze upon old Priam’s tomb ;
Now upon Nizza’s mountain-girdled plain,
Now by the crescent of calm Spezia’s bay ;
Or by the banks of Arno, underneath
The laurels of the laurelled city, where
Wisdom and art and song in ages past
Held more than regal sway ; again amid
Rome’s labyrinth of temples and of tombs ;
Now by the cliffs from which Amalfi smiles,
Thro’ her vine-clustered columns of fair marble,
O’er the Salernian gulf and Tyrrhene sea ;
Now on the steeps of the Euganean hills,

To breathe old Arqua's everlasting spring,
And bid the nightingale, whose songs are dreams,
Sing to the stars its love-begotten lay ;
Or on some Umbrian slope, upon the marge
Of Nera or Clitumnus, as they wind
Thro' Sabine pastures, ere they link themselves
With Tuscan Tiber on its way to Rome ;
Now by the plain where, desolate and lone,
Reft of its roses, Pæstum sleeps its sleep,
Still shadowed by its snowy Apennine
(Its double harvest now of thorns alone)
'Mid its three solemn ruins ; or beside
The dead wolf-city of the Libyan hills ;
Or in the southern vales of ruined Spain,
Twin-sister of the African Sahara,
Where, by the wingèd Darro, the Alhambra,
Half palace and half fortress, rears its pride,
Hard by the hill famed in Iberian song,—
Granada's hill, place of the Moor's last sigh,
Where in the silence of suppressed despair
He bade farewell to his beloved Spain ;
Or underneath fair Jaffa's orange-blooms,
Or the long slope of fragrant Lebanon,
Where old Phœnicia with her daughters dwelt,—
Sidon and Arvad and Berytus fair,
And Tyre, the city of the island-rock,
Queen of the seas ere Rome had found a name,
Or Argos sent its thousand-galleyed fleet
Against the towers of wind-swept Ilium.

‘ Yes, of myself shall be my song to-day,
As I sit here in pleasant loneliness,

Village and city left alike behind,
And nought of man within the reach of ear
Or eye, save yon far sail or rising smoke,
While dawn is making ready to come up
Behind that sea, upon whose mirror meet
Noon's first and night's last gleams,—a sea as calm
As that on which the lion of St. Mark's
Has for six centuries looked mutely down.
How real at this fresh hour all nature seems !
This stillness is reality itself,—
Reality without a voice or sound !
How real this night has been, and these clear orbs,
That just have passed in beauty out of sight !
This dawn, how real, tho' shadows sweep its sky ;
This star-girt earth, and this mysterious air
In which it swims, and these perpetual ripples,
That roll themselves in childlike sport upon
The sand and shingle of this rock-fenced bay !
The very silence of the sea takes voice,
And speaks old music that has slumbered there
Since Orpheus flung his lyre upon the waves.
All things around me and above,—the peak
That wears upon its shoulders like a robe
That dreamy mist, and these substantial clouds ;
That boulder by the stream, these pines that bend
To the slow breath of dawn, tho' not unused
To the rude turbulence of angry winds,
Are true. No night-begotten fantasies
Are these, no visions of the sick or idle ;
No mythic phantom is this noble cliff,
That drops its shadow on yon sloping strand ;

No fable is yon ever-singing brook,
Whose murmur is the music of the morn,
Whose sparkling silver, like a luminous cord,
Binds while it braids the many-coloured robe
Of that green vale below, which seems to clasp
All summer in its arms ; no dreamer's dream
The tremulous verdure of yon winding wood,
Dripping with dew and sunshine ; nor these flowers,
Which like low melodies fill all the air
With happy fragrance, each new-bursting bud
A beauty and a gladness and a song.
This circling atmosphere, in calm or storm,
With its great navies of slow-sailing clouds,
Some pure as snowy Alp, some rich with hues
Which never came from earth, some red, as if
Flushed with the fiery thunder from afar ;
The silent footfalls of the quiet stars,
Moving in measured grace across the blue
All the night long, how true they seem to me !
And yet this throbbing dawn with its new life,
That vibrates wide and far, seems truer still ;
For night is feeble and the day is strong,
Midnight relaxes and the morn restores.
I walk abroad beneath the quickening light,
And make its strength my own. O mighty sunrise,
How have I loved you, and with a deep
Intensity of spirit drunk your joy !
I see the day approaching when that sun
Shall cease to scorch, but never cease to shine !

‘ Amid the thoughts of hollow unbelief,
That would turn all to fable, I would grasp

These genuine things of nature, and would feel
How real is this universe, unseen
Or seen, impalpable or palpable ;
How much more real He from whom it came,
And who inhabits its prolific space !
What though a shadow falleth everywhere ?
The shadow tells me that the sun is up,
The unclouded sun, and that the night is gone ;
For it is light that casts the shadow, and
I know that where it is the truth must be.

‘ Faith’s vision is the vision of the real ;—
The true and the enduring are the things
We see not, for the supernatural
Hangs over and around us in these skies.
That which we see and hear and touch is not
The all of being, and outside this sphere
Of our poor vision there are other realms
And other beings truer still than these.
Yet ’tis not mystery, but that which lies,
Clear or less clear, within its golden mist
Enshrined, that the soul longs for, and with which
Alone its longings can be satisfied.
’Tis not the veil, but the invisible shrine,
The home of the Unsearchable beyond,
That the soul yearneth for,—a strange true world,
Far off yet also near, and intermixed
With ours, where the good angels go and come,
And which with the invisible majesty
Of an all-present Power is filled throughout.

‘ The untrue liveth only in the heart
Of vain humanity, which fain would be

Its own poor centre and circumference,
Smiling or scowling at the name of aught
Beyond the narrow circle of the sense,
As visions of the visionary soul,
As follies of the weak and credulous.
For men believe but what they wish, no more ;
And their profoundest creed is built on doubt :
With them all unbelief is honesty,
And all belief but weakness or pretence.

‘To creaturehood belongeth poverty,
Failure, and hollowness ; to God alone
Pertains the perfect and the ever-true.
'Tis He who without voice can speak to us,
And who without our voice can hear us speak.
Once did I hear a faint lip whisper thus,
Yet hardly speaking, for the words were low,—
“ God of the light, illuminate this gloom !
The light is Thine, and I Thy creature need it ;
Share it with me ! In Thee is light enough
For widest creaturehood ; Thou canst not grudge
One beam to this dim soul ; and that one beam,
What would it not accomplish ? Thou couldst give it ;
Thou wouldst not miss it, nor would Thy fair heaven
Be dimmer for the gift, nor would Thy angels
Feel as if thus they had been robbed of light ;
Nor would one eye above less brightly sparkle
Because another eye below was glad.
Enough for me, whatever ills might come,
Would that soft beam of Thine for ever prove ;
And this dark atom of creation, as
I feel myself to be, would give Thee praise.

Giver of light, oh, give that light to me !
I look above me, and I see each night
Squadrons of beaming orbs all marshalled yonder,
Millions of suns, with light enough for all
This infinite universe ;—oh, is there not
In Him who kindled them, and keeps them still
Blazing undimmed, enough of light for me ? ”

‘ Another voice I heard, less faint and low,
Of one who sought the true, and seeking found it ;
Who wooed fair knowledge as a heavenly bride,
Nor wooed in vain ; who, taking straight his way
To the one Fountain-head of truth, to Him
Who giveth largely and upbraideth not,
Was taught by Him who could not teach amiss.
Conscious of pain and ill, but above all
Of the deep void within an unfilled heart,
He sought for fulness, and the fulness flowed,—
Bread for a famished spirit, and it came ;
For He who, as each yellow August shows
Its empty barns, fills them all up anew
For winter’s hunger, unsolicited,
Pours the immortal food into the soul,
That, in the winter of its famine, asks
Of Him the living and eternal bread.
The voice I heard in its strong pleading said :
“ Oh, pity this my aching hollowness ;
Strip me of the unreal and untrue,
And show me Him, the infinitely real,
Who said not, I am *thought*, but, I am *truth* ;
Who said not, I am *power*, but, I am *love*.
'Tis an untruthful world in which I live ;

Duped, disappointed, cheated I must be,
If I with it am one, and take my part
Amid its mockeries of gold and wine.

“ Out from a hollow world I would pass up
To Thee in whom I live and move and am.
Being of beings, I was made for Thee :
Life is not life, and love is but a dream,
Apart from Thee. O Spirit wise and good,
Make conquest of my will ; let thy soft chains
Bind me with double bond of love and power.
Enter and reign within ; fill up my being ;
Then am I true and real ; I am myself,
And not another, as I hitherto
Too oft have been ! Then drink I in the health
And freedom of the liberating cross.
Pluck up each root of bitterness, and make
Each plant of sweetness to grow up within me.
Oh, drench me deeply in Thy heavenly dew,
That night and morning droppeth sweetly down
On weary spirits from Thy blessed heaven,
Like breath of angels in their ministry.
The current of the world is swift and strong ;
I cannot front it, save with Thee to help.
This world is not upon the side of good,
And fair truth feebly fights its onward way
Thro' hostile millions, sworn to fight it down ;
Error but slowly quits the field, and lurks
In every thicket in its sullen flight.
Thy ways are labyrinths, Thy purposes
Are dark, and in their evolution slow,
And hard to be interpreted ; this soil

Strewn with a cold confusion everywhere,
The evil and the good mixed up together,
The truth and falsehood working side by side,
Until the day of final severance !”

‘To error and to evil men bid welcome,
As to old friends, and unbelief sits down
At table of the rich and poor alike,
A pleasant guest, and maketh mirth for all
Above the grave of truth, with jest and song.
The honesties of earth fall sick and die ;
And men for place or fame, or viler gold,
Subscribe what they believe not, hiding deep
What they believe. The old nobilities
Of lofty life and simple courtesy
Forsake the earth ; Truth falleth in the streets,
And no man stoops to raise her from the ground.
Fall, mighty Truth ; thou shalt not lie for ever,
Nor moulder, where thou fallest, into dust !
The clouds are higher than the hills, above
The clouds the planets wander, and beyond
These kinsmen of this globe, the holy stars
Walk in their purity : all these may die,
Hills, clouds, stars, planets, but thou diest not ;
No one has seen thy monument, nor shall.

‘O awful silence of the Eternal One,
Who sits above and sees all this below,
Yet sees as if He saw not, hears as if
He heard not !—And the good tries hard to rise,
Yet sinks, like little waves far out at sea ;
Or specks that in the sky like rain-clouds look,
Yet pass without a shower for the parched earth.

O Thou who sidest with the weak against
The strong, reveal Thyself at length, and show
Thyself upon the side of good, and tell
The world what goodness is, and what is truth.
Tell me meanwhile that which I long to know,
More and yet more of the true things of which
Thou art the root and treasure-house, that I
May scatter round me the eternal seed,
And make earth better for my being here.
Teach me, each moment that I live, some deep
And sacred lesson, that I may not live
In vain, nor curse the day that I was born,
Bearing the burden of a useless life.
Oh, tune me, mould me, mellow me for use ;
Pervade my being with Thy vital force,
That this else inexpressive life of mine
May become eloquent and full of power,
Impregnated with life and strength divine.
Put the bright torch of heaven into my hand,
That I may carry it aloft, and win
The weary eyes of wanderers here below,
To guide their feet into the way of peace.
I cannot raise the dead, nor from this soil
Pluck precious dust, nor bid the sleepers wake ;
Nor still the storm, nor bend the lightning back,
Nor muffle up the thunder, lest its roar
Should break the rest of my sick sleeping boy ;
Nor bind the Evil One, nor bid the chain
Fall from creation's long-enfettered limbs,
To make all nature free as at the first,
And beautiful as free ; but I can live

A life that tells on other lives, and makes
This world less full of evil and of pain,—
A life which, like a pebble dropped at sea,
Sends its wide circles to a hundred shores.
Let such be mine! Creator of true life!—
Thyself the life Thou givest, give Thyself,
That Thou mayst dwell in me, and I in Thee.

‘I’ve been a dreamer, and I’ve seen the fields
Where the peace-roses blossom, and I know
Where the love-violets breathe their matchless sweets
Into the luscious air. It is a place
To which our tainted sunshine finds no way.
Beneath the cross they grow, and, gently freshened
By a bright river whose deep-hidden fount
Earth knoweth not, they spring, and bud, and bloom,
But never die. Thither I’ll go, and thence
Bring peace and love to a distempered age.
I in my very weakness will be power,
Drawing the living lightning from a sky
Beyond these clouds of time, and making thus
The world my debtor ere I pass away.

‘What tho’ I fall upon the battle-plain,
My work unfinished? Let me not despond,
As if the warfare had been waged for nought,
And I, with all my toil, had lived in vain.
The bravest take the front and are cut down,
Nor weeps the mother of a timid son;
Yet in their fall they conquer for all ages,
And their unfinished fight has gained, not one,
But many a battle for the struggling earth.
At death our doing of the work is o’er,

But the work done remains,—endures for ever.
We go, but that which we have done lives on,
And bears its proper fruitage after us.
We are the leaf and blossom ; we must die,
And in our dying bring forth higher life.

‘Not what we see or hear alone is real ;
There is an inner being, which with all
Its joys and griefs, its tempests and its calms,
Is yet more real than this palpable,
In which man’s science works, to which his eye
Turns for the beautiful, round which his mind
Revolves as round his true and proper pole.

‘What is the weariness that oft weighs down
This o’erwrought frame ? I see it not, nor hear ;
Yet it is here, pervading brain and limb.
What is this bitterness that breaks the heart
When the inexorable grave has claimed
The loved or honoured ? ’Tis as sternly true
As the sword-wound dismembering the flesh.
Shall I say mockingly to my torn heart,
Grieve thou no more ? Or to my heavy eyes,
Weep not ; as if my tears had been mere weakness
And my grief folly, idly lavished on
A phantom which a wise man may despise,
And which a brave man should not fear to face ?

‘Not what is present is the only real.
Next July’s sun and next December’s snows
Will not be more ideal than the past.
June will bring roses ; let us patiently
Wait on, for June will come, and with it come
Roses as fair as those once sung of old

By Teian or by Venusinian bard.
To-day will die, but with it will not die
That which is real. To-morrow will come up,
With all its inner and its outer circles,
With its still throbbing pulses, swift or slow,
Of seen and unseen life ; nay, far beyond
What we call death, the same reality
Unfolds itself hereafter ; there are realms
Stretching between us and the seat of God,
The depths and heights of which no mortal line
Has ever compassed. Science plumes her wing,
And moves from star to star, from sun to sun,
Measuring all visible distance, making known
The secrets of each orb, and spreading out
In sevenfold splendour every ray of light,
Like golden casket with its burning gems,
Discoursing of its riches and its power.
There is a land beyond these beaming orbs,
These pilgrims of the million-peopled sky,
Into which science has no entrance found,
In which she celebrates no victories,
And which she therefore would pronounce untrue,
A waste without a dweller or a tent,
A nebulous continent like that which rises
After the desert shower upon the sands
Of Arabah or Ramleh, named Sherâb
By the dark rangers of the wilderness.
There is a land beyond this girdling air,
A land which only He who has passed thro',
Or who has dwelt in it, can tell us of.
This globe of ours is not the goodliest

That navigates the immeasurable sea
Which men call space,—that ever silent sea,
Across whose awful face no tempest breaks,
Without a bottom and without a shore.
He is no dreamer of vain dreams who says
There must be something higher and more perfect
Than what we see around us, purer far
Than this stained life of ours, more blessed still
Than what we here call blessedness. The God
Who made us and our world is not so poor
In wisdom or in power, as to exhaust
His treasure-house upon our little world.
If there be then an earth, why not a heaven?
If man has here upon this kindred ground
A palace or a dwelling for himself,
Why may not then the great Creator build
A nobler mansion for Himself, to which
He may invite the creature He has made?
To whom meanwhile He gives this poorer earth,
The birth-place and the cradle of a greatness
Which eye hath not yet seen nor ear hath heard.

‘He who in name of grave philosophy
Smiles at my Paradise, yet with fond ear
Listens while Virgil, in his flowing verse,
Sings of Elysium and its fields of green,
But shows himself perverse and credulous,
Child of an unbelief to which the fabled
Is welcome as a refuge from the true.

‘He who in name of reason or of science
Calls me a dreamer, and my heaven a dream,
Or tells me that I need not look beyond

These hills of time, that sweep of burnished sapphire,
With all its moving and unmoving orbs,
Or the unfathomed and far-sounding sea,
For knowledge or for joy,—he mocks my spirit,
Quenches my hope, and casts me to the ground :
He is as one who flings a withering frost
O'er a fresh-blossomed orchard, or as one
Who turns soft music into discord harsh,
Or into stone transforms some beating heart.
He would surround this wondrous life of ours
With fabulous nothings, making faith a lie,
And hope a cloud just passing into air.
He bids me call this world a prison-house,
Girt round with walls which I can never scale,
Without a gate at which I may go forth
To seek and find a wider, truer home,
Nearer the seat of Him whom I call God,
Maker of all, and higher in the rank
Of that creation wherewith He has filled
His pregnant universe, whose measure is
Spacious infinitude, which lovingly
Clasps in its crystal and invisible casket
The works of Him who filleth all in all.

‘No cloudland yonder mocks the trustful gaze,
And no illusion cheats the groping hand,
Or the bewildered spirit ; all is true !
No night, with its dark billows from afar,
Like a vast sea, rolls in upon the day.
There lies the realm of verity, from which
All falsehood and uncertainty have fled,
Like tremulous mist before the absorbing sun.

Beyond the subtleties of misbelief,
Or the enigmas of entangled thought,
Or anxious throbs of the unresting heart,
That trembles at its own ambiguous echoes,
Stretches the calm expanse of light divine.

‘ There dreams can never come, and fantasies
Of human intellect can find no place ;
But there the certain and authentic dwell.
Escaped the meshes of imprisoning doubt,
That dragged to earth the spirit’s eagle wing,
We soar into pure liberty of vision,
And rest upon the high eternal peaks,
Round which no cloud can ever draw its veil
To hide the true from our impatient eye.
No oscillations of unsettled faith,
Eager to speculate, and counting doubt
The badge of mind’s nobility, the test
Of mental breadth and honesty and greatness ;
No mazes of perturbed or ravelled reason ;
No visionary guesses, dark or sunny ;
No insincerities nor empty creeds ;
No frozen dogmas nor unreal words,
Whose hollow notes moan madly thro’ the soul :
But where “ we know,” “ we see,” and “ we are sure,”
Is the unfaltering tone of happy hearts,
Who, after years of drifting to and fro
On the rough Euxine of this wayward life,
Have found their everlasting anchorage
In the calm bay, round which the eternal hills
Rise with their girdle of celestial green.

‘ Like clouds that have no anchor and no helm,

No chart nor pilot to direct their prow,
How many noble hearts, that might have blest
The world, and found rich blessing for themselves,
Sweep o'er life's surging sea without an aim !
Some sleep their years away, as if becalmed ;
Some rush before the gale, and wreck themselves
Upon an unknown coast ; some round and round,
As in a maddening maelstrom, fancy-lured,
Whirl without end, until their barque goes down ;
Some set their sails for a far land of gold,
And die amid its gems ; some court the storm,
And steer into its bosom ; some lie down
And watch the lightning as it spends its fire
Upon the rock, or quenches its quick glow
In the dark trough of the absorbing wave.
To such the present and the seen are all ;
Beyond the circle of the eye and ear
All is a void, unpeopled and profound ;
Nothing exists save darkness, into which
They are to pass, as all have done before,
With shuddering step, when this illusive life
Goes down beneath them, and that wrecker Death
Flings them upon a shore of nothingness,
Themselves a vapour, a dim wreath of smoke,
The shadow of a shade, dissolved for ever.

' O labyrinth of life, the bitter-sweet,
Which all have tasted save the happy ones
Who have gone early to their gentle sleep,
And never wept a tear nor sighed a sigh !
Thrice-ravelled mazes ! The quick ebb and flow
Of the wild tide within us, which we fain

Would stay, but cannot ; the vehement rise
And fall of the fair fountain of the heart,
That swells or sinks, we know not how or when ;
The things that men call love and hate and fear,
The agony or ecstasy of soul ;
The hemlock or the palm, the thorn or rose ;
The breaking bubbles of the cataract,
In music or in thunder as they pour ;
The silver smoothness of the summer stream,
That sings itself to sleep beneath the willow ;
The song, the sigh, the smile, the tear together ;
The cradle and the grave set side by side !

‘ O life ! O mystery ! what means all this ?
And how shall I interpret the caprice
That seems to rule the ages, as if ill
Had mastered good, and all things here below
Had snapped the bonds of law and love and truth ?
Life is not what it once was meant to be ;
Failure and change make up our days and years,
And man dreams daily on, still fond and weak,
Mistaking disappointment for the cloud
On which the rainbow smiles, and not the cloud
From which the tempest issues, looking for
The good time coming which has never come.
Alas ! the glory here, like yonder sun,
Is made for setting, lasting but a day :
The wise have written vanity on all.

‘ Depths are on every side of us ; we walk
Upon the narrow ledge of perilous life.
That which we see is not the thing that is,
Or only part of it ; and no man knows

The meaning of his own most simple prayers,
Or comprehends their issues ; what he seeks
Touches a thousand circles, far and near,
Requiring force and agency and skill,
Which only God can either loose or bind.
The thing we ask for we can tell ; the end
Of that for which we ask is far beyond us.
Sometimes before, sometimes behind us here
Our shadows fall, as shines the sun on us.
The shadowless is nowhere here on earth,
Its sun is never high enough for that.
All motion tends to rest ; the universe
Must stagnate soon with infinite collapse,
Unless the hand that set its orbs a-rolling,
With impulse ever fresh shall keep them so.

‘ The honours of the earth are fading fast ;
Its garlands blanch in the fierce sun of time,
And crowns grow dim with age ; the ancient thrones
That represent the royalty of ages,
And symbolize the coming monarchy,
Unpropped by aught save the unloving steel
Or more unloving gold, are giving way
And rocking, as the earthquake moves along
Beneath them ; sceptre after sceptre drops
From palsied hands, that fain would grasp it still.
This Europe, like a fleet of war-barques, swings
Hither and thither on her straining cables,
With all the shifting winds, and seems each day
Just at the point of parting with her anchors
And going down, like the great city, struck
With angel-millstone, to arise no more.

‘ The deep affections of the heart dry up,
Scorched by the lust of gold or power or pomp.
Still youth believes in beauty, feeds on flowers,
Drinks the dear sigh of one whose budding love
Is sweeter than all sweetnesses to him ;
Then rushes into Mammon’s foul embrace,
Wooing a world that gives no love for love.

‘ O wooed and won and lost, enchantress-world !
Whose syren-song sends up the burning pulse
To fever-heat, and bids all good things die !
O wooed and won and lost ! And with thee lost
All the bright gods and goddesses, which seemed
To make this earth to me a heaven below.
O wooed and won, fair world, but ever wooed
And won in vain ; for whose false comeliness
I left the wooing of a fairer world,
That might by this time have been surely mine,
And in the gain of which I might have found
A heritage of beauty and of joy
Beyond the richest tenancy of time.

‘ Ah ! the poor soorage of this mortal wing !
We rise and fall ; we fall and rise again :
Yet life is not all error, nor our past
All weakness and all failure ; forasmuch
As we are Heaven’s own offspring, there are thoughts
Within us which betray their birth divine.

‘ Why seek I what is earthly ? It departs,
And leaves me emptier. Why trust I man
Rather than Thee, the undeceiving One ?
Thou ever-faithful, he so seldom true ;
Thou near and living, he far off and cold !

I cast aside the finite and the low ;
Nought will suffice but that which is divine.
Matter and sense are but the lowest round
Of the high ladder, whose invisible top
Rests on a throne, and lands me in a city
Whose light is love, eternal and divine.

‘Tis said that out of death there cometh life,
That ashes are the soil whence freshly spring
The goodliest of the goodly trees of earth :
The seed we sow lives not except it die.
So did I see it when my idols perished,
When life died down, and when the cistern broke
Which for myself I had too fondly hewn.
So did I find it when the nightingale,
To which I had so fondly listened, died.
So did I know it when the earthquake smote
The brilliant shrine which hope and love had builded,
To be at once my temple and my home.

‘Then I discovered the now empty tomb
Of Him who, mightier than the grave, had gone
Up from its silence to the throne of light ;
And in that sepulchre I found the link
(Long broken, and dissevered from its chain)
Between me and the heaven from which this earth
Had broken loose, like a rebellious star.
The risen Victor there had fought my fight
And won my palm ; out of the tomb He had
Plucked immortality ; its emptiness
But pledged to me the fulness of the life
Which out of death His victory had brought.
Another’s power had done the mighty work,

And given me all its trophies and its fruits ;
Another's life had won for me the life
Immortal, and my death had passed away.
The love that seemed to fill that vacant cell
Was more than morning to a soul like mine ;
And in that desolate rock of Golgotha
There lay the firm foundation-stone on which
The new and fairer world is to be built,
Awaiting but the time when He shall say
To the cold ruins of this broken earth,
“ Arise from your pale ashes, and put on
A beauty which ye never knew before.”
Then shall the chaos of six thousand years
Depart, and the long day of order dawn.

‘ Old story tells,—it may be false, it may
Be true, I know not which,—that in Thy day
Of shame and agony upon the wood
Of Calvary, Thy shadow, Son of God,
Fell on the weeping robber at Thy side
Upon the cross, and under that strange wing
He refuge found from the oppressive heat ;
And under it, to Paradise with Thee
He went rejoicing. Even so on me
Let that same shadow fall ; it has not lost
Its sheltering power ; and so upon this earth
Let it abide, that in the sultriness
Of scorching noons it may refresh this waste,
And bring back the lost blessing in its joy.

‘ Ours is a world of symbols, sky and earth
Are ciphered o'er with type and imagery,
Big with bright truth in every atom here ;

And nature (as we call it) is not that
Which is, but that which shall be after this,—
The outline of a universe where all
The thoughts of God are ripened into fulness,
Each segment rounded to a glorious whole.

‘The flowers look truer and more lovable,
More like their own sweet selves, at eve’s pale hour,
Drenched in the dreamy light which twilight brings ;
So earth is getting truer in the signs
Above us and beneath us, as it ripens
Into the grey of years ; to us remain
The listening and the learning and the faith.

‘I would not sow the wind nor reap the storm ;
I would not plough the waste and barren deep ;
I would not shoot my arrows at the clouds,
Nor chase the thistle-down, nor count the sands :
I would live truly, doing a true work
In this my day of toil. I would not be
The fool or butterfly, to live unloved
And die in vain, unheeded and unmourned.
I would distribute thoughts where’er I go,
And scatter words that shall new-mould the world.
I would not be of those whose cry is change,
To whom all fixity is feebleness ;
Whose mission is to uproot all rooted things,
Unfasten anchors, slacken kestones, or
Sponge out the lines of everlasting truth,
Let loose uncertainty, and set the crown
Of honour upon unbelief and doubt,
Giving us doubly chaos back again.’

BOOK IV.

‘ YOU say I went to dig for gold, and found
But silver, or perhaps the viler clay.
No ; I set forth a poor man, and returned
A poorer, as men reckon poverty.
But in that land of strangers I have found
The wealth I had not thought of going for ;
And I am rich in the eternal gold.’
So runs the letter that lies open now.

‘ The mist had fallen upon the August moor ;
Long miles of ruddy heath that spread around
Had disappeared. The diamond arch of heaven
Seemed all dissolved in vapour ; the bold hills
Melted away ; the forest and the stream
Became invisible ; only the sound
Of the not distant waterfall, or wind
Struggling among the trees, reminded me
There was a world without, altho’ I could
No longer see it. Scarce an hour had passed,
When the dull mist began to raise its wreaths,
And the old world stood out again, all fair.

‘ So was it with me once, when, girt with mist,
I knew no world but the few feet of earth
On which I trod, and which ere long would be

My grave. But now the vapour has arisen,
And the new world which has come out in beauty
Has made me rich, for I am heir of all.

‘Men said to me, Your life is but an hour ;
Go and enjoy it while you may ; ’tis poor
And brief. They said to me, You are yourself
A mist, a shadow ; go and dig for gold,
And with that gold buy pleasure while you may.
I went, and found not that which I had gone
To seek. I went, and found what I had not
Been seeking : mines of gold and rocks of gems,
Tho’ not of earth, beyond the hills of time.
That which had once appeared to me so full
Was empty now ; and that which once seemed void
Was full. The beautiful had come at last,
And it was mine for ever. Men may say,
We are but vapours, and our life a cloud ;
We are but dreamers, and our life a dream :
The deep dumb future, into whose abyss
We drop when our last sigh is sighed, is nought
But the dark dissolution of the mist
Which had made up our poor existence here.
Not such am I, however poor my life ;
Not such, by Him who made me, was I meant
To be. My being is no vapour-drift,
That rises, spreads, and then evanishes
In air. My future is not nothingness,
Nor dead oblivion ; all my past yet liveth,
And shall live evermore, refined from dross,
And purged from the sad evil that has stained it.
I cannot wholly part with the bright love,

The scenes of beauty, sights and sounds of joy,
That made it what it was, a heritage
Peculiarly my own, the mystic fount
And parent of my vast eternity.
When I have reached the resting-place beyond
(Cloudland and wonderland all wandered thro',
Filled with the untrue and the true, the hues
Of unsubstantial and substantial sunshine
Still brightening or mellowing the long
Dim vistas of my threescore years and ten),
And stand upon the stable hills above,
I shall look back upon my winding way,
Upon the heights and depths of all my being,
Seeking to gather from the wreck or drift
Gems for eternity ; for all things here
Have treasures hid in them which cannot perish,
And which shall one day be restored to us.
Be it our life is but a mist, a cloud,
Or fragment of a cloud, yet still 'tis such
As hides a never-setting star behind,
Which will shine forth when all the cloud is gone.

‘O wondrous air above me and around !
Thou upper sea, at whose deep bottom lies
This buried earth with all thy shipwrecked stores !
They speak of ocean paved with silent gems,
Ages of treasure, gold and silver, dropt
Into its depths by those who sail the seas,
And over which the cold and covetous wave
Rolls to and fro, hugging its guarded wealth.
But when I think upon the myriad gems
Of mild or mighty song that since the youth

Of Time have poured into thy deeper depths
From lip or lyre, O all-containing air,
With thy transparent girdle compassing
This globe, I ask amazed, What has become
Of the far more than pearls cast into thee,—
The treasures of ten thousand melodies,
Ruffling or soothing thy wide-wandering waves
Hour after hour? Say, whither have they gone?
Drift they like derelicts, or have they sunk
For ever, or perhaps sweetly dissolved,
Like Cleopatra's gem? Say, is there not
Some dauntless diver that can cunningly
Descend into thy gloom and gather up
That wealth of melody, more precious far
Than pearls of Taprobanè, or the gold
Dark hidden in the unsearched mines afar?

‘Of all that real which is or is to be,
Which makes this life of mine no cloud nor dream,
I am not master; it o’ermasters me.
I mould it, and it mouldeth me; I live
In it, and in me does it also live;
It is a part of me, and I of it,
And in the midst of that invisible force
Which it contains, how helpless I; but still
It is not fate, ’tis living law and power
Which compass me around and make my life
Most free, and yet controlled by life as free
Without me and above me every hour.
What this strange being's depths contain I know not;
Each day's events and words dissolve in it
Like music in the air, and pass away;

And what of these may yet be gathered up
Like squandered gold, we cannot here foretell :
All true things of the past shall rise again.

‘Men hate the definite belief, because
It binds ; but binding is not bondage. See
How free yon planets sweep and shine and wheel
Hither and thither in their May-day dance !
See how yon free winds sport, yon rivers flow,
Each in its sphere the freest of the free !
Yet law is on them, and their freedom springs
From their acceptance of majestic law,
Which binds to liberate ; for law is but
The divine outcome of the true and perfect.
Men scorn submission to another, yet
Somewhere there must be mastership, a will
Bearing on other wills, a helmsman steering
The helpless sail thro’ the enslaving breeze,
And giving freedom to the barque he steers ;
All order else and progress cannot be.
Obedience, said the ancient Greek, of blessing
Is the great mother ; I must hourly watch
My self-will, which like a rebellious demon
Lurks deep within me, ready to spring forth,
And break up order, ruining my peace ;
Nor mine alone, but that of all around.
Of pride-begotten strife, the history
Of this disordered earth is sadly full.
There is a virtue in obedience,
Obedience pure and simple, like to that
Which angels yield ; yet man repudiates
The joy of meekness and the calm of order,

Too proud to be dependent, and forgetting
That to obey is more than sacrifice.

‘The pilot is the servant of the gale,
And not the master. Nature’s passive power,
Or active but unconscious energy,
Defies the human will ; man must ally
Himself with matter to subdue or mould it,
And, yoking to his chariot-pole the strength
Of fire, o’erpower the all-resisting force
Which hems him in on every side, and makes
Him feel the helplessness of will, as now,
Like a maimed eagle, it attempts to soar,
But cannot, for its hour is not yet come.
Will yon bright sea-bird with the crescent wing
Drop down upon the wave when I command it ?
Its will obeys not mine, nor owneth yet
A sway which one day will belong to man.
Will yon slow cloud dissolve itself in sunshine,
Or will that sunshine linger, when I bid it ?
Will July come in haste because I call,
Or will its dying roses bloom again
Because I say, O roses, wither not ?
Will midnight melt away and morn come up,
Because I throw my window wide and say,
O dayspring, dawn, and bring with thee the scent
Of happy flowers, the song of happier birds ?
Will these twin-stars, that faintly gleam above me
As sisters’ faces, like and yet unlike,
Draw near to me, that I may see and touch
Their silver crests, because I bid them come ?
Will death ungrasp his hard-locked treasure, when

I shout in his deaf ear and say, Restore
My stolen gold, and give me back my gems?
Will the turf pity me, when one by one
Recounting all my blanks, and pointing round
To the thinned circle of my once full hearth,
I plead to see the blue, blue eyes again,
And drink the softness of the tender breath,
Sweeter than sweetness, that breathed on me once,
When lip met lip, in pure and soft delight,
As morning rose or as the evening fell?

‘In a calm dream, one mellow August morn,
Methought that suddenly I came upon
An old and long-neglected garden, once
Rich with the radiance of a thousand flowers,
Now desolate and hoary; all its walks
And well-divided borders still the same;
Tall cypresses its girdle, and within,
Each odorous shrub that flourishes apace
In green old age, when the blithe-beaming flowers,
Which with their delicate purple wooed the dew,
Have all long since died down, and left behind
This waste of withered leaves on which I walk,—
This wilderness of melancholy fragrance.
Here the blue lavender shoots up its stalk,
And there the thyme its tiny blossoms spreads;
The aged box-tree and the sable yew,
With branches lopped into a shady bower,
In which there was the broken seat where once
The children gathered when the noon was hot,
And played or prattled or wove daisy-wreaths.
The ivy, too, was clustering on the wall,

And the old nests were in its tangles still,
Filled with sere leaflets, but the nestlings fled.
Some fragments, too, of boyhood's broken toys
Were strewed upon the unmown grass, or lay
Upon the moss-grown walks, their owners gone.
The scene was sadness, the remembrance sweet.
I stood and gazed, and wished that by a word
I could bring back the days and forms and faces
Linked with the dreamy scene ! I would have said,
"Come back, ye lost ones, and re-people this
Your place of mirth and love, and let all be
As it was then when I was one of you !"
But what were words or wishes ? That fair past
Lies far behind me ; and the power that might
Take me to it or bring it back to me
Is not in angel or in man. In fancy
I can be there again, and light up all
With recollections which bring only tears.
But the bright joy, the laughter and the song,
The busy feet, the lips of love, the eyes
From which time's future was shut out, to which
Life was one long glad present and no more,—
I have no power to make them what they are not,
No spell to bring the dreams of fancy true.

‘Life goes and comes not ; so I thought and said.
Joy ebbs, but flows not ; how shall I secure
The joy that never ebbs, the life that ne’er
Departs, abiding like the constant sky
Or everlasting hills ? I must be filled
Out of a fountain which is always full ;
So shall my life be life indeed, my joy

Be deep and tideless. Poor, I knit myself
To the eternal treasure ; weak, I bind myself
To the eternal strength ; imperfect, I
Put on divine perfection ; steeped in evil,
I clasp the eternal goodness ; sad and empty,
I claim the fulness and the joy which from
The heaven of heavens have visited this earth,
That men might be as God, and earth as heaven.

‘ I seemed to see, on one hand and the other,
The double infinite, far spread and dim,
The two eternities of time and space,—
So like each other, yet so diverse too ;
So simple, and yet so inscrutable.
I but a speck between them, yet as great,
Nay, greater sure than both of them ; to me
Their vastness does belong ; and I must know
What all that vastness is to be to me,—
Riches or want, the famine or the feast ?
Is it to be a living on and on,
As I do now, in weakness and in change,—
Perpetual climbing of these splintered hills,
And yet no summit reached, no resting-place,
When time’s rough work is done, and the tall shadows
Tell of the setting of life’s latest sun ?
Perpetual drifting thro’ these sullen seas,
Without an anchorage or haven in view ?
The always seeking and the never finding ;
The daily strife with evil and with pain ;
The hope, the failure, and the broken heart ?

‘ So did I muse, still groping wearily,
Till through the mist the true sweet morning broke ;

Soft light from a new sun beyond these hills
Stole down upon me, and the darkness fled.
Beneath the wing of Him to whom alone
These infinites belong with all their treasures,
I found myself;—and all these riches mine.

‘For weakness is the heritage of man ;
He is, and is not. Tho’ he fain would be
King of an empire that he cannot rule,
Lord of a heritage no part of which
Will do him homage or obey his will.
The outgrowth of his best-thought plans is not
What he had purposed ; ’tis the indirect,
The unpurposed issues of each change or motion
That are the mightiest and the most enduring.
The helm remonstrates with the pilot, thwarts
The wisest steerage ; thus man’s master-strokes
Are oft his follies,—in the dark he moves,
Even when he seems the most to move in light.

‘There once upon the earth was One by whom
Great things were done : it seemed as if His hand
Were framed to wield the sceptre of the world,
And stay the anarchy which long had made
This earth a waste. He bade the breeze be still,
And it was calm ; he seized the robber Death
When on his way to hide his spoil, where Nain
Looks out on Esdraëlon’s plain, and up
Old Nazareth’s brown hills, and with a word
Compelled him to gave back the widow’s treasure ;
He plucked the demon from the tortured soul
Of him who wandered ’mid Gadara’s tombs ;
He poured His light into the darkened eye,

And sounds, before unheard, into the ear ;
He smoothed the writhing wave, and bade the storm
Lie down in peace ; He touched the burning hand
Of fever, and the blood once more ran cool ;
He went in weakness to the Roman cross,
And from the tree of blood where He was nailed
Returned to Paradise, and took with Him
The robber at His side ; into the home
Of death He calmly entered, and came forth
In triumph,—every foe beneath His feet.

‘ His will was all-constraining law ; His look,
Like light, was silent power ; His words contained
Divine omnipotence. But man’s poor will,
Even at its strongest, what is it on earth ?

What can his words effect ? Come, let me try.

Silence, hoarse ocean ! Let me muse in peace,

Unruffled by the stormy dissonance,

The jar of battling billows round this rock ;

Silence, dark ocean ! once again I say.

It hears not, and my passionate words are vain ;

My will, my power, my reason profit nought

‘Gainst that which has no reason, power, nor will.

I cannot calm one wave, nor speak to rest

One ripple yonder or one eddy here.

I have no power o’er sea or slenderer air,

Save when I set them one against the other ;

Then I divide and conquer ; without that,

I am as helpless as a new-born child.

Yet I have soul, and these are soulless all :

Dead nature mocks the living. “ Peace, be still ! ”

From man is but a breath. That breeze which goes

We know not whither, and which came to us
We know not whence, is stronger than the strong.
Man speaks in vain. He is, and yet he is not
Monarch of nature. There is still behind,
Innate, invisible, and uncontrolled,
A something mightier than a human will,
A something farther down or higher up
Than man or chance or nature's ancient forms.
The laws of restoration or of ruin,
Of living and of dying, are too simple,
Yet too imperious and inexorable,
Too self-executive and too resistless,
To have come forth from earthly parliament ;
Untainted with the feebleness of man,
They each go out to do the work of God,
And with authority to speak His will ;
For deep within the being of those things
Which we call laws there is contained a power,
A living power, that shows all Godhead near.

‘Who spiked the royal Andes, buckled on
Their brigandines of snow ? Who called the stream
From under the deep glacier, bade it flash
From the lone rock-clift to the thirsty plain ?
Who tinted sky and sea with the one blue
That maketh both so passing beautiful,—
The upper hyaline,—of the two fair
The fairer and the calmer,—far beyond
The reach of storm to ruffle or to stain ;
The lower hyaline so vast, yet oft
Troubled and broken by the unbridled gale ?
Who lavishes the gold of daily noon,

Or showers the silver rain of brilliant night ?
Who bids the tides with soft and measured tread
Keep step to the mild music of the moon ?
Who lays the earth down to her winter sleep,
And wakes her up again when April comes ?
Who leads the sea-bird o'er the autumn main,
And brings it back when summer warms the wave ?
Instinct with life, beyond what man has dreamed,
Each statute does its office, sure and true,
As if an angel dwelt in it unseen.
There is no feebleness nor failure in it,
And ages cannot make it obsolete.
It was, it is, it shall be, until He
Who made it law and filled it with His life
Shall cancel it, or with a higher law
Supplant it in the wisdom of His will.

‘The laws of this old universe of ours
I cannot make or unmake ; each of them
Is far beyond me in its energy
For good or ill ; and if I cannot say
To death, Give up thy prey, nor to the grave,
Restore thy captive dust ; to winter, Go,
And let sweet spring return ; to the east wind, Leave,
And let the bland south breathe with healing balm ;
To the May-rose, Bloom round the golden year ;
To the warm leaf, Heed not October's frost ;
To this depressive heartache, Pain me not ;
To the old smile, Come back to faded lips ;
To love's lost lustre, Re-illumine the eye
That death has dimmed : if I am impotent
Amid this network vast of living law,

I must strike friendship with it, that the love,
The wisdom, and the power which dwell in it
May side with me and bear me nobly through.
All law must be upon my side, or else
I must do battle with the universe,
With every atom of it for my foe.
Law is the utterance of potent will,
Holy and wise and loving. With this will,
This royal will, my will must be at one,
Or else I sink, without a hope of rising,
My being all undone, and I a waif
Or wandering leaf on some deserted shore,
Tossed from the sand to the cold wave, and from
The wave to the unsympathizing sand.

‘O sound and shape and colour! what were earth
Without your harmonies? All life and love
Are in you, and without you all is chaos.
In you I see what law is, and how law
Pervades all being, sweetly permeates
All creaturehood, the lifeless and the living.
Yon ocean, as it smooths itself to rest
When suns are sinking o’er its golden brow,
Or as it gathers round it its green waves,
Like a rich mantle studded o’er with pearls,
When storms are rising, bends in matchless curves,
And brightens in each colour of the bow.
The air, the solid earth, the delicate sunbeam
Contain your riches, and each day unfold them.
Hue, beauty, melody, thus deeply stored,
Come forth in wide profusion without end,
Some bidden, some unbid, by human skill.

‘The law that does or undoes is beyond
The present sovereignty of creaturehood.
Hereafter human will shall be a power,
Like His who made it what it is ; and then
Each mute volition of the will may be
Of all earth’s finite potencies the most
Potent and swift. But now the will is nought ;
Powerless as childhood ; nature owns it not ;
Dead matter mocks its bidding ; death and life
Alike refuse it love or reverence.

‘I would go out beyond this narrow cage
Of individual being, and look round
Upon the many-peopled world of men,
For self is narrow and the world is broad ;
Small is the drop, the ocean infinite :
Part of that marvellous human sea am I,
A drop, a wave, a fragment of its foam.
To me all men belong, and I to all.
This earth is every man’s ; this earth is mine :
Its many-storied nations, far and near ;
Its subtleties of mind and will and heart ;
Its thoughts and dreams and fantasies, the true
Or false ; its tides, its tempests, and its calms ;
The living multitudes that move across
Its plains, or crowd its ever-seething cities,—
Offspring and workmanship of one great Father,
Vessels of noble measure, clay or gold,
Made to contain all sorrow or all joy,
And filled alternately with either, as
The bitter or the sweet of time distils
From the events of each day’s changing hours.

Each life a treasure-house of hopes and fears,
A garden crowded o'er with weeds and flowers,
A chamber with dissolving views all round,
A great existence, whose capacities
Are beyond measure and conception vast,
Each in itself an immortality.

‘I would shut out this little life of mine,
Or see it as a leaf on Time’s one tree,
A portion of the awful universe.
I am but one of myriads, who have all
A life to live under the common sky,
As pregnant with a hidden destiny,
As great and full of meaning as my own.

‘Upon this turf I would sit down, and feel
The silent benedictions of the clouds
Descending softly on our summer tilth.
The breath of the bright wind goes by in balm,
Fondling the forest-leaves, and from the pines
Bringing mysterious odours never stale ;
The light mists flit thro’ the fair sky like dreams,
And every bird is at its height of song.
I would go far apart from cities, where
Life with its thousand-tissued nerves and sinews
Works at high pressure, self its spring and aim.
Too steep the gradients of this headlong age,
Too sharp its curves for safety or for strength,
Too swift the motion, and too reckless of
Or law or life : so said I to myself,
As, looking down upon the smoke and fire
Of forges clouding the clear sky with gloom,
I heard the sigh and saw the sweat of toil.

‘ Here, beyond sound of the tumultuous street,
That knows no rest, I muse upon the wrongs,
The sadnesses, and sins that shade the earth,
And make us weary of its history ;
In spirit pondering how love and law,
The double keystone of the world’s strong arch,
Fast crumbling down, may be upreared again ;
Asking what means the age, its words and deeds,
And whither it is drifting, or what is
Its one prevailing spirit ? Is it not
To unitize, but not to unify ?
To force discordances together, leaving out
Their most essential parts or truths, and then
To call it universal harmony ?
To give self-will its widest, largest scope ?
To level earth’s old inequalities
Of matter and of men, and roll them out
Into a plain, monotonous and vast,
According to its thoughts of rank and right ?
Destructive not constructive in its aims,
It breaks the great humanity in pieces
Which God created a cohesive whole,
But re-cementeth not its shattered parts ;
It makes each man yet more and more a unit,
A separate atom of mortality,
Knit to no fellow, and existing only
For self, and for some narrow circle round him,
A solitary sand-grain, wearing down
To less and less as the sharp sea-wind stirs it.

‘ This is the day of overthrow : I see
The nations ground to pieces, and the crowns

All melted down, the purple torn to shreds.
The chrysm of ancient royalty is drained,
Each fragrant drop exhausted, not to be
Replenished till the great anointing comes
Of the new dynasty, which all the earth,
Weary with endless change, shall gladly own.
The tempest has gone out, and the fixed earth
Rocks to its centre. The uplifted axe
Is brandished everywhere, and does its work.
The sword has left its scabbard, and will not
Return to it until its blade is dim.
Strike, thou blind sword,—strike quick, and do thy
work ;

Level alike the evil and the good,—
The day of the upbuilding draweth nigh.
Earth has been long unjudged, He comes to judge ;
Earth has been long misruled, He comes to rule.

‘Error and truth are now at last alive,
Both putting on their armour and their strength.
Their day of dormancy is past ; they raise
Themselves to their full height, and face to face
Equip themselves for battle and for work.
But of that work and battle who can tell
The issues ?—who forecast the fears and hopes,
The weariness, the wounds, the broken hearts,
The passion, and the folly, and the sin,
That shall fill up our human history,
As field on field is fought, and lost, and won,
As ruin spreads itself abroad o’er earth ?
For living truth and living error oft
Work (as they go upon their earnest way

All thro' the ages) similar effects
Of demolition and commotion dire.

' Asleep, the warrior wins no victory,
But is led captive in ignoble chains ;
The drowsy sentinel betrays the fort :
So sleeping truth (and often has it slept)
Invites defeat and wins the coward's shame.
Asleep, the serpent is innocuous
As the young lamb ; awake, it wounds and slays :
So sleeping error seems to unskilled eyes
Harmless, nay, beautiful, no thing of fear ;
Like the coiled basilisk, it spreadeth out
Its glowing links, alluring all who gaze,—
Then wakes, and with its mortal poison stings.

' The battle of two wills is useless strife,
Ambitious wrestling for the mastery,
Whose course is havoc, and whose end is hate.
The battle of two minds is noble war,
Whose end is truth, whose trophies peace and love.

' Day fights with night, and night contends with
day ;
Each is alternate victor ; each has won,
And each has lost. No trophy crowns the brow
Of the victorious host. So would I not
That such, my friend, should be thy life-long war ;
Half shame, half glory. 'Tis to him that conquers
The crown belongs ; fight on and slack not ;
The strife is sore, but the reward is bright.
Wreathe not thy sword with roses ; let the edge
Be bare and penetrating ; double up
The well-strung bow, and let the shaft go free,

Like the white lightning from the ragged cloud,
Pregnant with fire. Strike home, and hew thy way
Thro' the thick hosts of evil ; or be what
The old Greek called the warrior, the spear-anvil,
Calm mid the raining dart-shower ; so shalt thou
Do thy one work, which thou alone canst do,—
Win the one battle thou alone canst win.

‘Men quarrel, and then seek to justify
Their variance, and each taunts the other with
“’Twas you began it all ;” the weaker side,
However just and honest, must go down :
The pitcher strikes the stone, the stone the pitcher,
It boots not which, the pitcher goes to pieces.
Might knows not right, and seldom have the many
Been generous to the few. When did the wolf
Pity the lamb, or when the kestrel stretch
Its wings above the dove save to devour ?
“Woe to the vanquished” is the history
Of human warfare here ; revenge and power
Are not for man. With neither can he be
Entrusted for a day ; and least with power.
Stronger than love of fame or love of woman
Is love of power,—power o’er our fellow-men ;
And power intoxicates, but most of all
Power spiritual, rule over souls, by what
Soft name we please to call it. The ideal
Authority, like that of God, the power
To bless, still more the power to curse,
Whether thro’ priestly touch, or magic rite,
Or awful voice, how coveted by man !
This double spur, how it has pricked ambition

On and still on, remorselessly beneath
Its iron hoof all truth and charity
To trample down, crushing the noble will,
The tender conscience, and the loving heart.
Woe to the weak, has been the battle-cry.

‘The mystic cup of power inebriates ;
And he who lacks it rests not till he finds it,
He who has got it thirsts for more and more.
Woe to the man who throws himself between
Ambition and its object ; sword and fire
(If sword and fire be weapons of the age ;
If not, some sure and palpable revenge)
Shall strike him down and see him vilely laid,
Broken in reputation and in heart,
A victim to the hungry lust of power.

‘But shall I thus forecast the day of evil,
When every lip beside me whispers peace,
When every lyre is strung to notes of triumph,
And all the prophets of the earth foresing
The coming progress ? When the heavens are clear,
And the bright planet of humanity
Is in the ascendant, shall I dare to speak
Of lurking thunder ? Yet can I forget
That the long calm is parent of the storm ?
In the clear sky the thunderbolt is forged,
And thro’ the silent air on silent wing
The eagle swoops to seize his far-seen prey :
So bursts the last dread hurricane upon
The sons of men, when all is mirth and song.
The wildest, widest storm these eyes have seen
Was once at dawn, after a tranquil night,

When not a whisper broke the breathless air,
To speak of peril or betray the foe.
Ocean was still in its serenest sleep,
The slow wave's sigh swept round the curving strand,
When, as from ambush, sprang the ragged cloud,
Startling the sea-bird with its sudden gloom.
The lightning, like a sword of sinuous fire,
Leaped from its scabbard, scourging earth and sea,
Seaming the cliff, sinking the helpless barque,
Filling the vacant sky with lurid light,
Till the broad billows glowed, one scroll of flame.
The red gale rode the ocean, rushed across
The writhing foam, breasting the fretful surf,
Flushed with the splendour of the tremulous bolt,
That went and came, like living minister
Of pent-up anger, from the solemn heavens.
The thunder, shouting from the stedfast rocks,
And sweeping round the concave of the hills
Whose sleep it had awakened, shook the shore.
In one quick moment every object changed ;
Chaos and darkness seemed to come again,
Deep calling unto deep with sullen throat,
Like minute-guns at Nature's funeral.

‘ So breaks the last tornado over man,
Disturbing his gay dream of human progress,
And levelling the tower he would have built
To scale the heavens and seat humanity
Upon the throne of God. So, when he thinks not,
The desolation cometh, and the hope
Sinks like the sand-built shieling in an hour.

‘ All that high science, soaring to the sun,

Or searching the profundities beneath,—
All that philosophy, with thoughtful lip,
Has spoken to the eager sons of men,—
All that bright poesy, adorning fact
Or summoning fiction to her aid, can do,
To heal earth's sickness or to soothe her fret,—
All that fond pleasure, in her gayest mood,
Has forged to fascinate or cheer the soul,—
All has been tried, but ever tried in vain.
These are but anodynes, whose opiate-draught
Lulls for a moment the deep-seated pain ;
They bring no restoration of the health,
No styptics for the world's still bleeding wounds.

‘ O good Samaritan, draw near at length
(Levite and priest have passed in coldness by),
Come with thy oil and wine to heal and cheer !
Humanity lies sick, all pierced with wounds,
Bleeding to death upon the rugged road
Of this strange life, and thou alone canst cure.’

The day leans down, and the light lessens fast,
The mountains into shadows melt away ;
Twilight is creeping softly o'er the shore
And winding round the rocks. We anchor here ;
For the great currents of the world sweep by,
Too strong for us without an anchorage
That will hold out against both tide and wind.
Ofttimes, I know, beneath a ruffled surface
Sleeps the deep under-calm ; but here, beneath
A tranquil face, I dread the under-storm.

Time's depths are now behind us, and our skiff

Has touched the shallows ; we let down the lead,
And find the fathoms few ; these breakers mark
The lessening depths ; a few more strokes, and then
We shall be resting on the safe, safe shore,—
The peaceful seaboard, where no beacon-light
Is needed to protect the midnight barque
From perilous cliffs ; and where (thrice happy they !)
So many of the loving and the loved
Have landed long ago, enskied and safe
Beyond mortality's corroding touch
Or death's unsparing sting ; rejoicing now
O'er sorrows past and glory yet to come,
And in the new and never-ending song
Praising the love that steered them thro' the storm,—
The love which, sweeping from their sky the clouds,
Showed them afar the signal-star of dawn.

Swiftly we steal along our orbit here,
Moving, and yet unconscious of the motion.
Earth rushes on in awful haste thro' space,
And yet no sound is heard, no quivering feet ;
No snowflake drops from off the mountain-pine,
No dewdrop trembles on the slender spray.
Swiftness is silence, planet-speed is dumb ;
Or if it utter sound to us, it is
The melody of motion ; not a jar
Or broken note in its perennial song.

So shall it be in the great age to come,
When the eternal orbit, not of earth,
But of all being, shall be entered on
With a fresh impulse from the hand that gave
Its motion to the universe at first,

As from the throne projected into space,
All weighed and measured in the unerring scale,
Each star and planet took its separate way,
Timed for the wondrous journey, which with all
Dumb nature's swift obedience they fulfil
In the calm willingness of happy service,
Which knoweth neither murmur nor mistake.

Content to do our work and battle on
In midst of disappointment, making head
Against the merciless hosts of evil, sure
Of victory nowhere now, yet ever sure
Of victory at last, tho' knowing not
Or how or when that triumph is to come ;
Armed only with the weapons forged upon
No earthly anvil, by no mortal hands,
And clad in armour which no spear can pierce ;
True to our Captain and our colours, here
We fight the battle till our day is done,
And the glad trumpet bids us quit the strife,
One against many, weary, yet full of hope.

The evening brings all home. For that we wait,
Which is at once our evening and our morn,
The end of evil and the dawn of good.
October sheds the leaf and April brings it ;
So one flower fadeth and another springs ;
Earth renovates itself. When we are gone,
Our homes will not be vacant ; and the crowds
Will swell our cities as when we were there.
Earth liveth on and on amid this change,
Or with us or without us to the end.

That end, ah, would that it were come ! All things

Press forward to it, and cry out, Delay not ;
For hope deferred has sickened the sad heart,
And men are asking, Shall it ever come ?

Shake down your leaves, O many-tinted trees
Of dying autumn ; let the forest gale
Of the unsparing north search through and through
Your desolate boughs, and heap the earth with sackcloth.
Another winter soon will lie behind us,—
One winter less to come ere the long spring
Shall o'er us shed its beauty and its balm !
Fling down your stars, O skies ! O waiting earth !
Heave with thy final earthquake ; and, O sea !
Let loose thy last stern tempest for the day
Of nature's shock, above us and beneath ;
Speed on Creation's travail-throes, from which
There comes at last the perfect and the fair.

BOOK V.

‘YOU crave me for some record of my thoughts ;
You give me yours, and ask for mine again,—
Some transcript of my musings, day by day,
While seated by my never-lonely hearth
In these sharp weeks, when keen December’s cold
Chains the free stream and whitens field and hill,
Covering old earth’s dead face as with a veil
Of frozen moonlight, hiding its shut eyes,
And shrouding features now no longer fair.’

So writes the hand of old companionship,
And so I read the page that now folds out,—
The thoughtful page of a most classic pen,
Which in a bolder hand would soon have led
Its owner into fields of world-wide fame.

‘Men and their words, as memory may serve,
Strewed over years long past, I would recall ;
They with myself, their thoughts with mine half-
mingled,—

Life interwoven with life and thought with thought,
Like boughs of the thick forest. One I knew,
A worshipper of shadows from his youth,
Who walked with me life’s path for many a year.
He loved the clouds because they were unreal ;

He followed most the paths which led to nothing,
And which, but for their own quaint windings, were
Devoid of beauty like a moorland track.

He looked into the mists for rainbow-hues
That seemed to be, but were not ; down the depths
For pearls that diver's hand could never grasp.

Between to-day's pursuit of all bright things,
And cold to-morrow's disappointed hopes,

His life went by ; yet other life than this

To wish he seemed not. Upon air he fed,

And things which grew of air ; he flung away

His twoscore years of prime, and left behind

Only a beacon, not a monument.

Gifts, fortune, friends, he had upon his side ;

But what were willing winds and waves to one

Who had no chart to steer by, and no haven ?

What was the soul, however large, to one

Who never looked beyond the suns of time

Save in sad mockery, to dream and speak

Of the unknown and the unknowable ;

Whose fancy was his only oracle ;

Who could buy land and pleasure at his will,

Yet slighted that which silver could not win,—

The true imperishable gladnesses

Strewn in our daily paths by heavenly hands,

Free as the general air or common sun ?

‘ He dreamed and doubted ; flung belief away,

Then took it to his bosom ; mused and wondered,

Thinking that what had been might be again,

Might be for ever. “ Who can tell ? ” he said.

“ Pluck the bright day while yet the sunshine lasts,

And call it thine. Belief or unbelief,
What are they? Only the unreal words
Of spirits groping in the mist for what
They know not. Is not faith a sick man's dream?
And is not truth a thing of age or clime?
And is not joy the transitory gleam
Of some aberrant meteor on its way
To nothingness? And is not all of that
Which man calls life a vision of the night?
And what is death? The exhalation merely
Of midnight mist, or fragment of a cloud,
On which some moonshine rested for an hour."

'So reasoned he, so doubted, and so died.
His life was wasted, and he sowed no seed
Which might spring after him; the world was not
His debtor while he lived, nor when he died.
His is a grave without a monument,
And no one has been glad that he was born.
The winds were ever on his side, and yet
He moved not on, but lay like one becalmed,
Or strayed in eddies, narrower or more wide,
As the capricious impulse urged him on.
There was a needy world around him, yet
Its famished spirit was not fed by him.
Sorrow and evil dwelt hard by, and yet
No ray from him e'er lighted up a soul,
Or made the world less dark than it had been.
"My early rising will not raise the sun
One hour the sooner," he was wont to say
As he lay down upon his bed of ease;
And yet, in the sad consciousness of life

Thus gone to waste, he would speak out at times ;
“ The fool resolves not till the battle’s lost ;
It is too late to don the helmet when
The head is struck and death is in the blow.
Fools at the end, the wise at the beginning,
Know what is to be done ; the wise proceed
Straightway to do it, in the face of storm
Or enemies or weariness of spirit,
Heedless of failure upon failure, still
Bent on success and resolute to win.
Fight your own battle ; lean on none but God ;
Beware of allies in a warfare such
As that to which thou hast been born, and which,
Or well or ill, must be fought out alone.
No sin (so says the proverb of the East)
That is persisted in is small ; no sin
Laid at God’s feet remaineth great or dark.
Tempt not the tempter ; he is near enough
Already ; bid him go upon his way,
And leave thee to pursue thy work in peace.
Be wise in time, lest on your tomb be carved,
As upon mine, the words that warn,—TOO LATE.” ’

Thus writes another, chronicling the past :
‘ Your old friend the Beginner, as you called him,
He promised fair ; none fairer ; he has gone,
And left no mark. Capricious and unstable,
He finished nothing, and his life was filled
With poor abortions,—torsos,—hardly that ;
As if upon each marble block that lay
Around, he had his chisel tried in vain.

'Twas not mere fame he lost ; that was not much :
He left the world no richer than he found it,
And passed away unmissed,—none to record
His birth with joy, or, visiting his tomb,
In love to say, What owe I not to him !

‘ He left the harbour to go down at sea,
The dull wave closing over him unwept.
He started on the race, but dropt aside,
Losing both goal and prize. He drew the bow
Strongly and well ; the arrow missed the white ;
In fickle haste he flung away the bow,
And emptied the full quiver on the ground.
Brilliant and sparkling, but unstable, like
A fountain playing in the sunshine, swayed
Hither and thither by the chafing wind,
Then sinking suddenly to nothingness,
He promised brightness, but it died in gloom.
His life was lived in vain ; at every point
Unfinished and abortive, broken off
Just when it might have told ; begun in earnest,
It quickly cooled, as if the fire within
Had burned itself away before the time.

‘ Yet find I, written in some wakeful hour,
When the full sense of what he might have been
And might have done burst in upon his soul,
Thoughts such as these, not worthy to be lost :
“ All things, both good and evil, have their cycles—
The sickness and the health, the calm, the storm,
The labour and the rest ; they come and go
In tides, alternating their flow and ebb ;
Not like the river, always on and on.

Let not to-morrow swallow up to-day.
Too late to-night the skilled physician comes,
To call back life that left at early morn.
To-morrow's calm restoreth not the wreck
Of yesterday; nor roots itself again
The uprooted pine. Then on, however dark;
The undoing is beyond us, and the loss
Is loss for ever; therefore quarrel not
With the dead past, which no device of thine
Can bring to life again, but fling thyself
Upon the future, and make it thine own;
Seize for thyself its unwrought mines of gold;
Let not the past be father of the future,
But live as thou hast never lived before;
So shall thy poverty be turned to wealth.
The night brings back the stars; the wintry frost
Freshens the blood; the keen gale of the north,
Tho' blowing over miles of desolate moor,
Makes the pale cheek to bloom, and bloom again,
When softer breezes left it only wan.
Stumble and fall not, you will mend your pace;
Stumble and fall, you must at once arise,
Or else be trodden down by those behind.
Make sure of every footstep, yet remain not
Upon the ladder's lowest round, but rise,
Rise daily; it will take a lifetime's years
To reach the top. Like huntsman of the rocks,
Pursue thy prey, and know what thou pursuest.
Oft, when we think that we have seized the quarry,
'Tis we ourselves are caught. Grasp not too much,
Lest thou lose all. Think not your safety lies

In many roads ; one pathway will suffice
Better than thousands, if so be it lead
To the one city whither thou wouldst go.
'Tis by a single, sometimes slender thread,
That we unwind the skein ; the many threads
Do but entangle, and make effort vain.
Who strikes the naked anvil but a fool ?
Bring out the glowing iron, lay it there,
Then strike and spare not ; so thy skilful arm
Shall not bring down the steady stroke in vain.
Think ere thou openest thy lips, and know
Whither thou goest ere thou tak'st thy staff.
Life is no venture, and that soul of thine
Was not created to be flung away,
Or spilled like water on the absorbing sand.
Make much of May ; husband thy summer hours,
And lay up sunshine for the day of frost.
Winter is coming, and it may be sharp ;
Its icy touch will freeze thy fervent veins."

' Thus wrote he down at times his thoughts, like one
In quest of goodness, groping for the day.
He saw the light, and yet he walked not in it ;
He saw the darkness, yet he shunned it not :
The currents of the world rushed by, and swept him
From every anchorage far out to sea.

' Another college-friend you may remember,
In threadbare raiment (for with shirt of ice
Cold poverty had girt him), but with mien
Modest, yet dauntless as the winter oak
That breasts the gale upon the battered cliff.

His lean face told us that his fare was scanty ;
His big cloak hid the poverty beneath ;
His dwelling he preferred to be unknown,
Save to the few who loved him for his worth,
And whom he trusted for their worth again.
His books were old and torn, save when a friend
Had lovingly but secretly supplied
His need. November's rain fell hardly on him,
And the keen March-breeze struck him to the bone.
His midnight lamp was ill supplied with oil,
And even that stinted store was dearly bought
With scantier meals. His winter hearth was cold,
The sharp wind searched his attic thro' and thro',
And the snow sifted thro' the broken panes
Of his ill-lighted chamber. When the days
Grew warm with summer's love and summer's smile,
He sought the sunshine of the southern glen,
That won him with its silence and its joy ;
Or the soft shade of the fresh-budding fir
Upon the ruddy moorland, where the lark
Sung its delicious song to the clear noon.
For he loved summer with a passionate heart,—
Wept when it ended, joyed when it began,
And sighed when sweet June's longest evening told
That the dear brightness had begun to wane.
He revelled in its brilliance ; it was his,
Poor tho' he was, and he could have it all,
Yet no one be the poorer for his wealth.
His mind was lofty, and his soul was large ;
In person comely, and in manners far
Above his birth. Refined in tone and thought

By nature and by study, he won hearts
And found companionships. The honour came
He did not seek ; but more, the wisdom came
That he had sought so fondly and so well,—
Wisdom, the fruit of self-denying years
And studious toil, whose ripe abundance filled
His eager spirit ; and with it there came
Eternal wisdom, such as He alone
Can give who giveth unupbraidingly
And with a generous hand to all who ask,
Filling the soul's wide vessel to the full,
And mellowing while gladdening all the life.

‘ Lifted from poverty, he sought not wealth,
But took the little he had won, and went
To live a useful, uneventful life,
Out from the world's great city-heat, and from
The sweep of her fierce tempests, which strike down
The sons of earth's ambition, who seek fame,
And power, and eminence, at cost of all
The calmnesses and charities of life.

‘ And one went with him to his sweet retreat,
Whom he had loved and sought, but loved and sought
For years in vain. Her friends in pride had said
That she should wed herself to nobler blood,
And she had yielded to their pride ; yet still
Her soul was his, even when she stood aloof.
And she was worthy of his lofty spirit ;
Nor could she hide from him the secret joy
His presence gave, even when her words were cold.
He won her at the last, with all her worth,
And he forgave her these slow years of pain,

In which she loved as tho' she loved him not,—
Forgave her for her beauty and her love.

'The freckled sky bent mildly over them,
The sun went softly thro' the snowy clouds,
The scent of many a rose was in the air,
The west wind wooed the clover in its bloom,
And, like a lover's breath upon the cheek,
Made each rich blossom quiver with delight,
Wandering unbidden o'er the glowing heath,
On that fair noon when before man and God
They vowed the holy vow that made them one.

'Twas a chill, livid eve when they returned
And crossed the threshold of their future home.
The sky looked wan and weary, and the gale,
In haste to strip the forest, swept along
O'er the desponding earth; and as it went,
Smote the slow pulses of the shivering sea,
And roused them to the tempest's fever-heat.
For miles along the level sand, the surf
Rose like a silver ledge to fringe the gloom;
While farther out the breakers foamed and fell,
Their long grey tresses loosened in the breeze,
Deep calling unto deep in tumult wild.
The near seemed cheerless, and the far had lost
The clear, calm outline which to distance gives
Its sweet and finished loveliness; the clouds
Seemed mountains, and the mountains seemed like
clouds,

So mingled and confused was earth with heaven.

"'Is this a shadow," said they to each other,
"Even now begun to fall upon our lot?"

Or shall we set the noon against the night,
And take the presage from the former ? Or,
Yet better, shall we fling all omens off,
And look above the darkness and the light
To Him, the Guider of our course, with whom
Dwelleth no night, and into whose fair heaven
Clouds cannot come, nor tempest, nor the bolt
Of the capricious lightning, nor the chills
Of winter, nor the tainted breath of sickness,
Nor the hot tear, nor sigh of broken heart,
Nor sin, the bitter fountain-head of all
The ills that wander o'er this helpless earth ?

“ Then on we move ; thro' darkness or thro' light,
Thro' the thorn-thicket or the garden-walk,
O'er the rough mountain or the easy plain,
All will be well. The tent is not the palace,
The desert is not Eden ; but the love
Which fills yon heaven is ours for evermore,
Shorter or longer let our journey be,
O'er every scene the blessed cross sheds day,
And love is leaning o'er us from the height
Of the invisible heavens, still bidding us
Look up and love, look up and taste the joy.
Day unto day is uttering happy speech,
Night unto night revealeth wisdom there.
The cross where He, the Light of light, once hung,
In conflict with the Prince of Darkness, shines
In heavenly gladness, piercing every shade ;
From it distilleth health, and up from it
There wells the water of immortal life.
Ours be the faith which turns all ill to good !

Ours the quick ear that can take in far music,
And learn both song and tune! Ours the keen eyes
That can see angels where no others can!
Then on we move, to face each coming storm;
Brief is the day of tempests, brief the age
Of ill, the end of which is endless calm.
Shall He, beneath whose everlasting wing
We have sought shelter, e'er forget us? Yes;
When the neglectful sea forgets its tides,
Or skies grow weary of their glorious stars,
Or the sun trips in mid-air,—rushes off
Into the distance of oblivious space,—
Then we may be forgotten; nay, not then,
Not even then;—let all the universe
Break loose or crumble into ancient dust,
There still remains the constant love of God.
No flux of tide in that eternal love;
Always the same, a calm, unchanging sea,
Which never knew a shipwreck nor a storm."

‘Two tranquil years they lived, and then she
passed
To be with Him whom, seeing not, she loved;
Leaving behind her here a happy child,
Fair as her mother, and as full of love;
Who, as her womanhood came on, found one
Whose heart was hers, to whom she gave herself;
And for a season sunshine seemed to come
Back to her father's dwelling and her own.
That season was not long; the cloud returned,
And brought with it a double grief and gloom:
Her heart's beloved perished in the deep;

She pined, and followed him ; one child she left,
Sole prop and solace of the aged sire.

‘ Him found I in his solitude,—the friend
Whose worth and learning we had oft-times proved
In other days, when both were in our prime.
He told me all, speaking with that deep calm
Which lengthened sorrow brings, and with that
tone

Of solemn cheerfulness oft given to men
Whose days are closing, and who know that soon
They shall rejoin the lost, o’ertaking those
Who had outstripped them in the race of time.
“ Here she was born,” he said, “ my child of hope,
And here I saw her die, on the same couch
Where she who bare her died, long years before.
This is her child, a mother’s orphan love,
All boyhood’s brightness nestling in his cheek.
He calls me father, for his own he knew not,
Save by his picture yonder, and his tomb
In that green hollow, where the name,—no more,—
Is cleanly carved on the enduring stone.

Mother and father, sister, brother, all
Am I to him, my thrice-beloved boy :
Dear for thyself art thou, thy joyous self,
Staff of my right hand, upon which my age
Leaneth so fondly in my wanderings here ;
Dear, too, for her that bare thee ; all her face
Mirrored in thine, and all her voice in thine
Echoed so truly ;—O my summer-rose,
Which the cold night-blast struck down from the stem,
Thou art not here to shed thy fragrance round !

Thou, the bright May-bud,—*this*, the glistening dew-
drop

Which thou didst clasp within thy opening folds.

“You see her tomb,—her own, her husband’s grave,
In the low nook which for herself she chose,
Hard by the happy streamlet, and as far
As might be from the melancholy sound
Of the cold sea, beneath whose fatal surge
He whom she loved, and on whose arm she leaned
A few fair years, went down, when with brave arm
He fought the foaming breaker, as it swept
On to the sinking shell of the strong barque,
Which the fierce north wind flung upon the rocks.
To the wild cry of shipwreck quick responding,
He braved the billow in its strength, and led
The hope forlorn into the deadly breach,
And in that ocean found an early grave.
He swam for life ; the stalwart arm struck out,
And seemed to conquer for a time ; he rose
And faced the storm ; but the resistless wave
Proved stronger than his arm, and bore him down.
Flinging upon the wreck the shorebound line,
He sank, and rose not ;—with him all in me
That we call life went down and disappeared.

“Unsympathizing sea, absorbing man
And all man’s sweetest loves and tenderest hopes
In thy cold gloom ; upon thy heartless wave
Hither and thither tossing in thy mirth
The corpse of age or smiling infancy,
Of noble youth or gentle womanhood,
To fling them on the slippery rock afar,

'Unshrouded, 'mid the tangle and the foam,
And sending up into the brooding air
The mocking laughter of thy greedy surge!
Ungracious and inexorable sea!
Unlike this mother-earth, which giveth back
All lovingly the sacred seed we sow
In her fond bosom thousand-thousand-fold,
Thou graspest all, but thou restorest none;
Insatiable in thy hunger, in thy caves
Far underneath the tide of moving green,
Unfathomed and unvisited of man,
Burying them deep, without a monument
Or turf to mark the lone, lone place of love.
Soon shall I follow; life to me no more
Is life upon this desolated earth.
'Tis not that dying sun alone that haunts me,
As o'er yon level forest he goes down,
And tells me that another day is gone;
It is the memory of suns long set,
Linked with old loves and joys, with looks and voices
That have all passed, and come not back again,
Or only come in visions of the night,
Like the lark's song heard far above our heads,
As from an unseen lute amid the clouds.

“Care for this boy when I am gone, and may
A brighter course than mine to him be given!
I would be gone; for him alone I live.
Already has the deep home-sickness come,
Which men of mountain-lands are said to feel
In exile, when the visions of the past
Rise up to view, and beckon their return.

God makes the blind bird's nest, the proverb says,
And I am blind with sorrow ; so to Him
And to His Christ I do commit whate'er
Or long or short remains of life to me.
Care for the boy, my friend, when I am gone.
A few years longer than myself, perhaps,
Thou may'st be spared ; oh, watch his sunbright hours,
That no polluting shadow dim their gold ;
From the thick evils of a perilous world
Guard thou his youth, and help to shape his course
In ways of uprightness when life is fresh
And flexible, ere conscience has been seared
And the heart petrified with early vice.
Earth's air is dull and damp ; it suiteth not
The tender bud or the new-opened blossom.
Its summer's sun inebriates the soul,
Its winter's chill freezes the springs of faith,
And hard it is in such ungenial clime
To bring to ripeness spring's fair promises.
Oh, teach him to be true to man and God ;
Set his face stedfast to the eternal light,
The light of Him who dwelleth in the light,
And with whom darkness has no fellowship.
Take thou the helm, and teach him how to steer,
To trim the sail, to watch both tide and wind,
Shunning the sand and rock, with pilot-skill
Rounding the headlands of a stormy age,
Marking the beacon on the cliff or isle,
By no false light misled on either hand ;
Pressing with straining mast and swelling sail,
By chart and compass, thro' time's perilous deep,

To the safe shore on which no wreck is strewn,
Nor evil enters with its serpent-trail,
Nor sin deforms, but righteousness and peace
O'erflow in placid fulness, making all
Fair beyond thought, as in time's holy dawn
(Now long since overcast), when the first sun
Smiled o'er the beauty of this dædal earth,
And laid its light kiss on Armenian snows."

'Some years he lived, then followed those he
loved,

And sleeps with them beneath the well-known tomb.
The child lives on, and oft his boy-bright eye
Reads the dear names engraven on the stone,
And then looks upward to the peaceful blue.
What he may be when I am gone I know not,
But what I see gives hope of what I see not :
I mark the gleam of the true life within,
Like star that finds its way thro' broken skies,
Or like the first stroke of a master-pencil
Flung on a virgin canvas, yet to be
Spread out for many an eye to gaze upon,
To be at once a lesson and a power.

'That which we sow is the corruptible ;
The incorruptible we soon shall reap.
'Tis weakness that we lay beneath the turf ;
The strength is coming in the day of strength,
The age of immortality and love.
Man measureth the known, but only God
Measures the unknown. Man amid the seen
Maketh his dwelling ; 'mid the unseen, God.

Man in his balances the present weighs ;
The future, God, in more unerring scale.
Man needeth for his path the constant light,
Or else he stumbleth ; in the darkness, God
Moveth in majesty as in the light,
Darkness and light are both alike to Him.
What is within the veil to Him we leave ;
It will be fairer than what here we see,
It will be more enduring than the past.

‘ Who falleth next on this sad battle-field
Of earth, where millions have already fallen ?
Some friend, or child, or brother, then myself ;
Until the level turf with myriad mounds
Is heaving, burdened with the endless slain !
For dust we are, and shall to dust return.—
O winds that never weep, when will ye blow,
And flowers that never fade, when will ye spring ?
Suns that shall never scorch nor set, when shall
Your rising come ? O summer of the living,
When shall your life-day dawn ? Morn without clouds,
Rich with the freshness of celestial dew,
When will ye light up these cold hills of time ?
O healing Spirit, come ! There is no health
For the great sickness of humanity
But in thy warm breath, thy benignant touch.
Breathe on this mortal earth, and lay thy hand
Upon its sick-beds ; light up faded eyes ;
Pour immortality thro’ every vein ;
Spoil the rank graveyard of its golden dust,
And cover the dead earth with holy life.

‘ So mused I as I left my friend’s abode,

Returning homewards, all the history
Of our past threescore years awaking fresh
To memory, and calling calmly up
Thought upon thought, as scene on scene arose.

‘They are not silences that dwell around us
Outside the curtain of this noisy earth,—
Sorrowful silences, as men have dreamed.
The universe is God’s, and He is *there*,
The great inhabitant of all we see,
And all we see not ; yet Himself distinct
From all His handiworks, the living God,
In whom we live and move and have our being.
The spheres are there, with all our melodies ;
They whom we loved are there ; they are not dead,
But gone within the veil, to reappear
When evening comes, like the light-buried stars.
What we call space is not vacuity,
Silent and cold, like a forsaken hall,
Or wilderness untenanted by man.
The angels’ tents are there, unseen by us,
And angels’ songs are sung, by us unheard.
The past does not absorb us, nor destroy
The life which age by age is passing in
Within its gates of shadow and of awe.
We live upon the past, and that which we
Call death becomes our life ; the things of old
Are always new, yielding to us each day
Their never-ending lessons of deep truth.
Its strength the palm-tree drinks from the dry sand,
And the vine feeds on ashes ; we build up
Our daily being out of that which was,

But is not,—things and men of other times,
The ruins of old shrines and palaces,
The habitations of the ages gone,
Love's relics, friendship's gifts, the faded flowers
That when they perished left our garden bare.
We live upon the dead, and we in turn
Shall yet be lived upon by those who loved us,
When, like our fathers, we have shed our tears,
And done our work, and fought the fight of time

‘O fruitful past ! exhaustless treasure-house
Of untold wealth ! prolific soil, in which
The present sows itself, and out of which
There comes not one brief harvest, but a long
And blessed reaping for the sons of man !
Much has the present hour in store for us
Of happy wisdom, gleaned from each new day,
To make us truer, nobler, holier men.
We would go forth, and from the thriftless air
The hoarded sunshine pluck at will ; and yet
It is from summers long since out of sight,
And suns long set, we gather truest life.
The present has a near and low horizon ;
That of the past is measureless. The world,
The busy world, that lives in its own day,
Lies flat upon the ground and sees no stars ;
Its face is downward, and it clutches fast
The golden or the iron bars of earth.
We would look out upon the ages gone,
Dig their old mines for treasure, search their seas
For pearls that nowhere else on earth are found.
The true is there, and even the fabulous,

Tho' teeming with the false and dark, at times
Contains the true ; like Scandinavian woods,
Where iron tales were told from iron lips
By iron men, that teach nobility
And hardihood of spirit to our sons.

'The wise man's heritage is everywhere ;
Nowhere the fool's, tho' half a realm be his.
The wise man gleans in every field, and finds
No mine exhausted, no truth stale or poor.
Honouring the tree, tho' lowly, under which
His father and his father's father once
Found shelter, he sits down beneath its shade.
For old men's words are true, he says ; old thoughts
Grow milder and more mellow with their years,
And their grey hairs are comely ; he would treat
The past with reverence, yet sifting still
The evil from the good, and wondering when
Truth, now half-hidden, shall spring up in strength
From the dull soil, and spread o'er every field.
The rude, loquacious present, and the past,—
The tranquil past,—how different in their mien
And their instruction ! Yet how well we know
That silent lessons root themselves the deepest,
And bear the brightest fruit.—The file of time,
Inaudible, eats thro' earth's iron bars,
Opening the dungeons of our fettered race ;
As once the angel, with mysterious touch,
Threw wide the gate, and bade the messenger
Of heavenly truth go forth in liberty
At midnight from his Syrian prison-house,
With, " Gird thyself and bind thy sandals on,

Fling thy cloak round thee, up and follow me."
Yet the cells close again, and other chains,
Brighter perhaps, but stronger, bind the race.
The day of true celestial liberty,
The era of a liberated world,
Of chains for ever broken, has not come.
The sword of truth with its mute edge hews down
The falsehoods of the ages everywhere ;
Yet still they rise again. The old soil, still
Fruitful in ill, retains its poison-roots,
And yields a harvest of yet deadlier growth.

‘ And yet I know that ill shall have an end,
And time’s disorder into order rise.
The deluge that has covered this fair globe
With its disastrous waters shall ere long
Be dried, rolled back from off a suffering soil,
And pent up in the caverns whence it came.
These sifting winds of earth shall sink in balm ;
This strife of nature shall at length be still,
The storm-song sink into a dying fall,
And the chafed air breathe only summer-peace.
All life’s entangled knots unravelled then ;
The inky stains, in millions dropped upon
The once fair page of this unblemished earth,
Sponged out by Him who made it fair at first !

‘ Evil ! I meet thee in my daily walk ;
And first I tremble sorely ; then I ask,
“ But whither goest thou ? ” Thou answerest,
“ To where all evil ends, all sorrows die.”
So let it be. But yet it seems as if
The day of gladness were too long deferred.

‘Suns of the past, whose settings now are done,
Shine out on us with all your treasured warmth
And ancient grandeur, as when ye arose
On Eden and its joys, or lighted up
The peaks of Ararat, or shone upon
Shinar and Ur and Haran, all along
The pilgrim-life of the believing man,
Who went where the great Voice commanded him,
Where the celestial glory guided him,—
He knew not whither ; or as when ye shone
On Zion with its marble palaces ;
Or on Moriah’s temple blazing full,
In the rich glow of Oriental gold,
Hour after hour around its glowing walls
And smoking altar ; or as when ye saw
The Roman firebrand kindle its last flames,
The Roman battle-axe come thundering down
Upon its cedar-work, till all was ruin,—
Gate, wall, and rampart flung into the depths
Of the dark hollow that engirds her round,—
The smoking ruin bubbling up with blood.

‘Suns of the past, that lighted up old Troy,
And wreathed fair Ida with your joyous glow ;
And gleamed on Salamis, or bronzed the Nile ;
And struck the lyre of Memnon, or stole thro’
The pillars of Palmyra, and blazed o’er
The giant gates and avenues of Thebes,
Or watched the rising of the Pyramids,
Or chisellings of Assyrian palaces
And the great idols of the Nimrod fanes ;
And saw Phœnician Carthage rise and fall,

And Rome ascend her ancient seven-hilled throne ;
That shone upon old Britain's sullen wastes,
And Caledonian forests, ere they knew
A history, and stored up within their mines
The dormant fire, that like a prisoned spirit
Was to awake in later days, and make
This isle the wonder of an envious world.
Suns of the city and the silent waste !
Suns of the sea-swept cliff and dew-bright plain,
That gleam along the river, light the glen,
Or gild the ocean, o'er whose ancient face
For ages ye have shone in calm or storm !
Suns of earth's sapphire roof, beneath whose bend
Time's deeds have all been done, time's words all spoken,
Time's mighty changes wrought !—I turn to you,
And ask you to reveal the hoarded secrets,
Evil and good, that ye have witnessed here.

‘Ye cannot tell the future, nor can see
Into its boundless distances, tho’ high
Your station be above the hills of earth
And clouds of time. Yet, as I look on you,
I muse on what you one day shall behold
Hereafter, when the ages shall unroll
The long, long hidden good in store for man,
And bid creation doff its withered leaves
To clothe itself with spring,—resplendent spring,
The spring of heavenly verdure, holy peace,
All purity, all beauty, and all love.

‘Then heaven has come to earth, and earth is heaven ;
The shadow of the tomb has passed away,
And all is life ; each mortal mist is gone,

And earth is fair once more ; death is dethroned,
Its sceptre shivered, and itself a name
Among the fallen potentates of old,
That moulder in dishonoured sepulchres,
That have been, and yet are not, nor again
Shall ever be. The breaker up of love,
The sunderer of families, the fierce,
Remorseless foe of man exists no more :
The spoiler now is spoiled, the prison-house
Is emptied, and the prisoners go forth
With song and joy ; the long captivity
Is now avenged ; the broken heart is healed,
The tears are wiped, the age of light begun.

‘Sun of the coming age, how long shall these
Deep clouds of evil that pollute our sky
Delay thy dawn and muffle all thy beams ?
Rise in thy strength, and bid the night be gone ;
Go forth in haste, O pure and perfect Light,
Do battle with the darkness of the world,
And overcome ; rear trophies everywhere ;
Dissolve the dazzling error ; glorify
The truth, and send it forth enrobed in power,
To do its work among the sons of men.
The frost of unbelief now covers earth,
Whitens its fields and binds its joyous streams,
Sparkling, yet, in that very sparkling, cold.
Shine out, and with thy universal warmth
Melt down this frozen darkness, dissipate
Each vapour that would dim the eye, O Sun !
Bid the false vanish, and the true appear.

‘All that is true in worship must have root

In truth, eternal truth, and not in dreams.
All that is real in service, or in that
Which men religion call, must be the offspring
Of truth, and not of error or of doubt.
For he who deals with God must know the God
To whom he cometh, and must know the way
By which the Holy is to be approached
By the unholy, or for prayer or praise.

‘True Light, whose place of dawn shall be the East,
The ancient East, old birthplace of the true,
Array thyself in majesty, and come!
Out from fair Salem’s rock-hewn sepulchre
Thou comest in the greatness of thy strength
And brightness of Thy beauty, scattering gloom
And pouring out Thy gifts of peace. Not like
That which so fatally once issued from
The fabled casket of the all-gifted one,
Filled with all human woes, to be let loose
Upon a hapless race ; but like the sweetness
Of the rare spikenard-box of old, once broken
To anoint the Holy One, which filled the room
With odour, such as told of heaven itself ;—
So from the opened sepulchre come forth,
Fair sun, and with the fragrance hidden there,
Immortal, irresistible, divine,
Breathe o’er this sickly soil, and sweeten all
Our atmosphere with everlasting health.’

BOOK VI.

‘I WAS not born amid the beautiful ;
I am no dalesman, child of rock and stream ;
Nor have I lived among the scenes on which
The eye of culture rests.’—So writes another,
Whose noble memory is fragrant still.—
‘I have known little of the laughing earth ;
My way has been amid the toils of life,
Through the dun smoke of furnaces, and sound
Of hammers and of fire-blasts, day by day.
Scant measure of the golden sun these eyes
Have seen, and seldom has the song of birds
Cheered me ; the music of the merry morn
And sorrow-sweetening eve have not been mine ;
Not mine the balm of garden or of field,
The breath of waving woods, the chant of streams ;
Not mine the May-buds, with their summer-eyes
Bright as bright starlets, looking up to heaven.
A shaded world I’ve known ; and the dim years
Have wandered on in cold monotony,
Almost from childhood ; and yet I have felt
A heart within me beating warm and free,
That longed to get outside of this volcano,
To pierce these murky wreaths that close me in,

And see the beauty of the world without,
Of whose fair skies so many lips were speaking.
Free blood is always warm, and the free warmth
Expands our being's every part, and is
A birthright of itself, a heritage
Of strength and greatness to the common soul,
Of which it was not otherwise the heir.
Now strong, now weak, I knew myself all o'er ;
Now flushed, now pale, as the veins filled and emptied,
And the soul ebb'd and flow'd, immured within,
And seeking to escape its prison-house.

‘I was not poor nor rich, tho’ from my youth
A son of labour, yet of labour which
Had disciplined my soul, and taught me much.
Men may buy gold too dear, but wisdom never ;
At a great price had I my knowledge bought,
Thro’ years of change, yet deemed it cheaply won.
I did not scorn the toil, nor think myself
Ignoble among men because of it.
All blood is ancient, poor and rich alike ;
I knew that all the keys of earth do not
Hang on the rich man’s girdle ; and I saw
All seek their own, like rowers, every man
Pulling toward himself : I set my feet
Upon the stedfast ground, and needed not
To prop my fortunes with another’s wealth.
All is not visible that helps ; there comes
Full many a blessed angel, unawares
And all unseen, to give us strength in hours
Of weakness or of sorrow, when our cry
To man is vain, and all things are against us ;

To stay us up when falling, or avert
The perilous stroke from the quick-cleaving sword,
Or to divert the lightning from its path,
That would have slain us with its angry edge.

‘ I saw men lean upon their fellow-men,
And with them fall. I saw men wildly plunge
Into life’s faithless marshes, there to sink.
In giddy crowds, I saw my fellow-men
Walk over broken arches, as if all
Were solid pavement, dropping one by one
Into the foam below. Content to pass
In unambitious calm to the one goal
On beaten paths, I neither rose nor fell.
The little bird, they say, builds little nest,
So I, with little gold, pass thro’ this world
As one who has few wants, and ask not much
For a rough journey that so soon will end.
Better the free bird of the barren moor
Than the caged eagle of the castle hall.
He that wants gold must dig for it ; and he
Who seeks a harvest must both till and sow.
Sow not the sea, nor plough the shingle-slope ;
'Tis labour lost, 'tis time clean cast away.
Choose the good soil and seed, nor sow the wind,
Lest thou reap but the whirlwind ; sow not folly,
Lest thou reap madness ; seek not mighty things,
Nor aim at lofty place or purple pomp.
Crowns cure no heartaches, and the blazing hall
Of midnight, decked for pleasure’s gayest mirth,
Pours in no light into the troubled soul.
More than a gate of iron does it need

To keep out want, and yet it no less needs
More than a gate of gold to keep out fear
And sorrow from the heart in evil days,
Or bar the entrance of the foe of foes.
Death comes altho' no trumpet should be blown,
As night will come even tho' no curfew sounds.
Call that alone your own which no one here
Has given you, and of which no man can rob you.
Good cannot come too often or too soon,
Nor can ill visit us too seldom, yet
How little know we what is good or ill !
This only do we know of certainty,
That either we must die the early death,
Or toil and suffer much : such is the lot
Of man and woman ; such the discipline
By which the soul is purged, and meetened for
The kingdom of the sorrowless above.
The path between the cradle and the coffin,
Be it or long or short, is never smooth.
The ladder to the City is the cross.
Yet oftentimes we double all our grief
By moody visions of imagined ills,
And shrink from that which we shall never see.
 ' If I would know the Highest, I must stoop
And take the lowest place, for only there
Will He reveal Himself, and tell me all
The greatness of His everlasting love.
If I would find the Highest, I must rise
And soar above this cloud-encompassed globe.
And yet our roots of being are beneath
And not above this perishable soil.

In secrecy and silence our true life
Gathers its strength and stores up all its beauty ;
Then shoots above the surface, spreads itself
To the fresh breeze and vital sunshine, thus
To blossom and to ripen its rich fruit.
The vine of life needs training ; and it asks
Both cold and heat, the midnight and the noon.
It roots itself in ashes, yet it climbs
All heights ; and from its lofty terraces
It shakes its fruit exulting, to refresh
The toiling dwellers in the vale below.
Let no one say, To this I'll never stoop ;
I was not born for this ; a higher lot
I claim than that of bondsman to the soil.
Thou know'st not what is coming on the earth,—
How low thou may'st be brought ere life be done.
Say not, This brackish well I will not taste ;
Ere long thou may'st give thanks that even this
Is left for thee in such a burning waste.
Nor say, Let me enjoy my lightsome youth,
And take my fill of folly ; then repent,
And so undo the evil. Is it so ?
Does tainted blood thus easily run pure ?
Are wasted years thus easily recalled ?—
Unstring the bow, but will that heal the wound
Made by its shaft ? Or sheathe the angry sword,—
Will that give back the blood which it has shed ?

‘But I am wandering. Yet thoughts like these
Would oft rise up within me as I went
And came with easy step and easier heart,

To fill up day by day my round of toil,—
Toil without care, whose nights were calm and sweet.

‘ Not once, nor twice, I took my eager way
Beyond this smoky canopy ; I longed
To gaze upon the virgin-world without,
Unsoiled with earthly vapour, such as here
Hideth the fair face of the universe,
Its stars and sun, its hills and woods and flowers,
Its buoyant streams and unpolluted sea.
The city was my home ; as such I loved it ;
And yet there seemed a glorious belt of light
Girdling it round afar, which wooed me hence,
And ofttimes drew me out beyond its gloom.
These cities are the mysteries of earth,
The undredged ocean-depths of human ill.
I cannot fathom, nor can read aright
The meaning of this human chaos, which
Lies all around me, heap on heap, and I
An atom of the smallest of these heaps !
The goodness and the crime, the joy and grief,
The song and silence, mirth and bitter tears,
The dying and the living all are here,
Crowded together like the ashes flung
From its great heart of fire by some volcano.
I love the *night* of cities, when deep sleep
Falls on the many thousands who all day
Toil ’mid their noise. Their noon, no doubt, is dim ;
The sweat of labour is on each wan face,
And pleads for rest and silence ; but their midnight
Is like the desert when the winds are low,
Or the great sea when tempests are at rest.

The livelong day I seem to hear but man,
And man's monotonous, never-ending shout
Of anger, or of bustle, or of fret :
The night brings back the still small voice of God.
The day has eyes, but the blind night has ears ;
So said the ancients. Let us borrow, then,
The ears of night, and listen, as the notes
Come from afar upon the lonely spirit,
To teach the wisdom which the day denies.
I loved to gather flowers ; I bade them grow
Beneath my window in the narrow nook
I called a garden, tho' the dust and smoke
Tainted their fragrance, sullied their bright bloom.
But the pure flowers without I loved the best,
And sought them out o'er many a pleasant mile,
When welcome holidays brought liberty,
And drew my steps to moor or field or hill,
Leaving behind the city's sultry smoke.
The orchis of the marsh I plucked ; the bindwood,
That on the hedges hangs its white and purple ;
The primrose and the daffodil, that scent
First summer's maiden air ; the buttercup,
Spangling the meadow with its brilliant gold ;
The timid violet, that hides the bud
From which the sweetness breathes ; the pimpernel,
That prophesies of coming rain or sunshine ;
The star of Bethlehem, which I have heard
Grows goodliest in Judea's desolate vales ;
The lovelorn lily, leaning o'er her stem
And spilling her fresh odours on the ground ;
The sweet-pea, sweetest of the sweet in scent,

With all the rainbow on its blushing buds ;
The lily of the valley, sheathed in green ;
The snowdrop, smiling o'er departed winter,
And yellow crocus, singing, " Spring is come."
I found few flowers erect ; they droop, some more,
Some less, however loved and visited,
Hanging their heads upon the stem, afraid
To look straight at the sun, or take the stroke
Of the descending rain ; save only one,
The water-lily, as it floats upon
The tranquil lake, and gazes ever up
In rain or sunshine on the welcome heavens.
Which shall I be, I said,—the one erect,
Fearless of heat and storm, or bending o'er
Upon our mother earth, like all the rest ?
Drooping or upright, let me still inhale
The breath of God, and drink the light of heaven.

‘Some miles away, unsoiled by smoke and dust,
Spread out a spacious moor ; its solitude
To me was sweet society. Slow years
Have passed since last I lay amid its heath ;
Yet, fresh as yesterday, I call it back.
Round yon green hillock the faint-scented broom
Entwines a coronet of matchless gold ;
Here the sweet-briar, with its fragile rose,
Hard by some sapling birch exhales its joy ;
There the bog-myrtle, covering miles of moor,
Wastes its wild perfume ; and the meadow-queen
Sweeter than all, and beautiful as sweet,
Adorns the marsh. O untrained loveliness,
And odours as untutored, of these wilds,

That have no eye to see them, and no fond
Enthusiast like myself to drink their breath ;
Of what a glorious world ye form a part,
And that no mean one ! Wondrous wilderness !
Uncivilised and barren, yet how fair !
I would not blot you from the face of earth,
Nor turn you into gardens. Hold your own
Against the encroaching culture of the age,
And sparkle on, ye gems of ancient days,
Pure relics of old nature in its prime.

‘ One flower I found, and loved above the rest,
The rose of roses did it seem to me ;
I plucked it from the garden where it grew,
And brought it gently home to grow in mine.
You knew its worth and loveliness. Bright eve
Was that when first she stood beneath my roof
And lighted up my dwelling,—fair and young,
Her lot seemed glad, for holy love was in it,
That maketh all things bright ; our cup ran o’er.
We praised the Giver of the gushing joy,
Walking together o’er the restless earth,
With faces set to the eternal hills.
Good to be loved and good to love it was ;
To be, each to the other, all in all ;
Sweet to be little known, and to retire
Into each other, like the flowers at even,
Closing their petals till the morning break.
Nearest to God, they say, is he who has
The fewest wants : our wants were small and few ;
There seemed no place to wound us on. The storm

That struck the tree-tops or the ambitious spire,
Passed over us ; we were not high enough
To feel its rage. Yet with the wedding-ring
Come cares as well as joys ; for sorrow lifts
The poor man's latch, and sits down at his hearth.
The valley that escapes the upper storm
Receives the flood that rushes from the hills.

‘ Three children filled our home with infant-mirth,
Each voice a melody, each face a flower ;
They shone and left us, not to reappear
Until the grave gives up its holy dust.

‘ Our little ones all died in summer-time :
No winter's frost thickened their parting breath ;
No cutting March-wind smote their tender cheeks,
Nor chilling snow upon their coffins fell,
But only sunshine. There was kindly grass
To lay above the mould, and roses fresh
To sprinkle on the turf, a fair blue sky
To cover all, and tell that God is love,
And that which sin has done will love undo.
I thought it strange that summer breath should kill ;
And yet 'twas better thus to lay them down,
Swathed in soft sunshine, likest to themselves,
And that amid such brightness they should pass
Up to the fields which no wan winter chills,
And where they rest until the wondrous dawn.
Day of the great undoing ! When wilt thou
Arrive to smite the spoiler, pluck the spoil
From his unpitying hands, refill the heart,
Aching and empty, with its treasured gems,
That for a season have thus passed away ?

When shall the Healer of the sick earth come ?
Creation sighs for Him ; man's weary frame
Asks for His coming ; maimed humanity
Bids Him make haste ; each deathbed crieth, Come ;
Each broken heart appeals to His great pity,
And asks Him not to tarry ; earth's deep graveyards,
Filled with the relics of lost love, cry out
And say, How long ? Man's never-resting heart,
Drooping by reason of His absence, pleads
For His arrival, turning wistfully
To the still clouded east, expecting dawn.
O day of promised health, when wilt thou come ?
The fore-glow is not yet upon the clouds,
And the tall peaks are still asleep in gloom ;
The snowy sheath upon the ancient hills
Is still without its streak of morning gold.
The day-star lingers, and the ocean sighs,
The forest waves its boughs, and eagerly
Beckons the lingering sunshine. Morn of morns,
When wilt thou dawn, and bring the eternal noon ?

Another child was born to us ;—alas !
That life should bring death with it, and that joy
Should introduce the sorrow and the night.
Strange sickness smote the mother when her child
Was born ; the freshness faded from her face ;
Her cheek grew wan, and yet her eye was bright ;
Her step was feeble, but her spirit firm ;
Her voice was faint, and yet her words were strong.
Within the drooping heart there seemed to sit
A blessed angel, whispering peace divine,
And telling of a love that could not fail,—

A love whose cup of honeyed wine can make
The wormwood sweet, and bid the heart be still,
Lifting the sinking spirit into strength.

She knew the arm on which the helpless lean,
The resting-place where weary souls sit down,
Footsore and fainting, on Time's rugged road,
Beneath the heat of life's unsparing noon.

‘She loved and watched and nursed her infant joy,
Not long to love and watch and nurse below.
Each anniversary of her great grief,
As summer months brought round the well-known days,
Deepened the shadow of the past upon her,
And made the earth appear less truly home.
We spoke the words of comfort, and her eye
Kindled ; but kindled most whene'er we told
Of the reunion, where the broken links
Of mortal life become immortal chains,
Where all is endless fellowship, and where
The living splendour of the jasper wall
Shuts out the foe of life. Our words availed
For short relief ; the shadow came again.
The rivers ask not is it much or little
That they can pour into the craving sea,
But each one giveth as he hath to give :
So gave we to her, in her soul's sore thirst
And weariness, such as we had to give
Of gentle truth, and she was comforted ;
Yet needed to be comforted again
By a far wiser comforter than we,—
By Him who said, My peace I give to you,
Let not your heart be troubled nor afraid.

‘One night she hushed her babe to sleep ; lay down
To rest beside the crib that held her treasure,
And sleep the mother’s ever wakeful sleep.
The baby slept, the mother closed her eyes ;
The baby woke, the mother slumbered on ;
The baby cried, the mother heard no cry.
The morning came, the mother opened not
Her eyes upon her darling ; her stiff fingers
Still grasped the cradle-string, the cradle rocked not.
She had gone up from her last couch on earth
To one above, to wait the meeting-time
Between herself, her husband, and her babe.
Her last words, dropping from her lips that even,
Ere she lay down upon the quiet bed,
From which she never rose, were, “We shall be
Like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”
Her grave is in the churchyard, just between
Her little ones, and on the stone her name
Carved simply, with one beaming text above :
“Till the day break and shadows flee away.”

‘Each cross has its inscription, and on mine
Was written legibly, “That which I do
Thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know here-
after.”

And each cross has its well, deep, deep below,
And inexhaustible,—a well of life
For after-days of drought and barrenness.
Each cross, too, has its rainbow, light on cloud
Cast sweetly down, that all may not be dark.
My rainbow seemed to break, but yet upon
The fragment, as it hung upon the cloud,

Right o'er a marble tomb, I read the words,
"The sun shall be no more thy light by day."

'Small sorrows fret us, great ones overawe ;
The petty weaken, but the huge make strong,
And strip off the unreal and untrue.
The storm has grandeur in it as it splits
The stubborn rock, and sends its boulders down
Into the valley ; but the peevish gust,
Which in the self-will of its idleness
Tears the gay buds to pieces, is made light of.
The little cares of common life but vex ;
Misprized or overlooked, they pass away ;
The large ones lay the spirit in the dust,
Then lift it up again to higher greatness.

'O sacred fire, which burneth not in vain,
Extracting all the sweetness of the incense,
Filling the temple with its gracious odour,
And sending up to heaven the purgèd praise !

'O inward bread, of which the sated world
Knows nought, in this its day of luxury,
When all is feasting, and the high-heaped board,
That scorneth fasting, feedeth every lust !

'O mighty spell of God, that disenchant
This world's bewildering beauty, strips the veil
Of unreal glory from the face of earth,
And shows us what the things around us are !
Out from the clamour of the thousand sounds
That take all music out of life, we are
As in a moment snatched, and made to dwell
Alone, in silent converse with that world
Where song is sweetest, into which the loved

Have gone, and into which our hearts have followed,
As our far truer home ; from which there comes
A richer melody than we have known ;
Whose silence seemeth but a softer sound,—
The lowest note on the wide-ranging scale
Of perfect harmony, a note that suits
So well the solitude of sorrow's cell.

‘This home of mine, once filled with household wealth,
And rich in love that seemed imperishable,
Was now a shipwrecked vessel : four already
Washed overboard, the rest to follow soon.
But who that has not known the loss can tell
The desolations of the hearth, when those
Who gathered round it once in childhood's joy
Have all been taken, and each chair is empty ?
He who has crossed the river knows its depth,
Others upon the brink can only guess.
Sorrow lights up the cross, and takes us back
To the old rock of Golgotha, when night
Came down upon the soul of Him who knew
Nor sin nor darkness, dwelling in the light
That fills eternity with life and day.
We see the Mourner, Him who bare our griefs
And carried all our sorrows, moving on
From the cold, stony cradle to the cross,
Under the sentence of a righteous death,
Because of those whose guilt was on His head ;
And the old hymn swells out in plaintive notes,
As in the ages gone, that tells of all
He bore : “ *Lugete pacis angeli.*”

‘Beneath the shadow of the covering cross,

Where danger cannot reach us, and where all
Life's evil is transfigured into good,
Faith finds her refuge in the day of ill,
And hope re-plumes itself for higher flight.
True hope is always lofty, and presents
The skyward side of morning to the soul,
Bidding it look beyond these mist-wrapt hills.
The hope which millions live on is a shadow
Which never turns to substance, a thin vapour,
On which the sun is shining for an hour.
Some live on this, and with them the good time
Is always coming ; and some live on dreams,
Which never grow to waking history,
Nor make a doer of the dreamer ; some
Feed upon gloom, and can see nothing bright
Even in a star, or brighter than a star,
The happy face of laughing childhood ; some
Live upon mirth and roses, smiles and song,
As if their being were an insect's day,
A swallow's life upon a sunny lake.
Not all are glad who sing ; how many here
Utter a mirth which they have never felt !
Not all are sorrowful who, looking round
With shaded forehead, and with fervid eye,
And grave pale face of pity, sometimes wet
With tears of love, on a self-cheated world,
Would fain relieve the anguish that they see,
And share their own deep ever-serious joy
With men whose laughter is but hollowness.

‘ It is not everything that gold can buy ;
What man needs most is far beyond its reach.

The joy that fills and ends not is of heaven,
And all heaven's gifts are, like the light of noon,
Free to the sons of men, or rich or poor.
There is no evil eye above, to grudge
Another's good ; 'tis only upon earth
That envy dwells. Love fills the heaven of heavens ;
For all that God has given or daily gives,
The least or largest of His liberal gifts,
Are unbought, like the dew upon the mead,
His own free love the fountain-head ; a love
In which all blessing is contained for man ;
The love that gloweth in the sun and moon,
In the rich concave of the bending arch
Or face of this all-hospitable earth,
Where love once walked in lowly majesty,—
Where heaven descended with its gifts of peace,—
Where the great life was lived, the great death died,
That death might die for ever, life might live,
And the deep grave be emptied of his prey.

‘ When we are born into the world we weep,
We know not why,—some sudden pain, perhaps ;
Some chill that strikes us from the wintry world
On which we all unconsciously are entering ;
Or some foreboding of the perilous future,
As if the new-born soul did prophesy
In sad but inarticulate wail, of days
To come ; as if the curtain had been lifted
For a brief moment, and the vista given
To infant eyes of shaded scenes afar,
The changes of the threescore years and ten.
Thus life beginneth in unconscious tears,

And each day onwards does the cause reveal.
The prophet-infant looks before and weeps,
As did the Hebrew babe upon the Nile.
The old look back into the wrinkled past,
And learn the causes of their childhood's tears.
For, each day, sorrow greets us on our way,
His face becomes familiar like a friend's ;
We bid him stay one moment, while we ask
His errand : " Whence, and whither, friend, to-day ? "
He answers, " Even where I oft have been ;
The way I know, and thou shalt know it too."

' Yet to how many are such lessons vain !
Sorrow goes past them, like an empty cloud
That brings no rain, but merely for an hour
Darkens their sky. They weep, then wipe away
Their tears, and life assumes its smiles again.
More gaily than before their barque moves on,
The wrecks that lie beneath it all forgotten,
And the rude breakers of the wind-lashed sea
Smoothed into silver 'neath a golden sun.

' Learn well, and learn from friend and enemy,
From sorrow and from joy ; learn and unlearn.
'Tis hardest to unlearn, for the warped will
Resists the teaching and repels the teacher ;
Erasure of long error from the mind
Demands a sharp and skilful discipline.
But yet more tedious is the process needed
For straightening of a long-perverted will,
The undoing and unlearning of the past.
Trust not the progress of a boastful age ;
Each age confutes old falsehoods, but begets

Others as sad as those which it explodes.
Could things be done twice over, grave men tell us,
They would be rightly done, and what one day
Was done amiss would be set straight the next.
As if men never erred but once ! So speak
The oracles of time ; and yet I know not
If such has ever been the pliancy
Even of one human will. I find, alas !
The foolish and the wise alike refuse
To learn and to unlearn, tho' both are prompt
To teach, and wonder why their words are vain.
'Tis not for want of true words truly spoken
That man remains untaught in every age.
Adown the shaken leaf or sloping rock
The raindrop glides ; down the hard mountain-side
The streamlet pours itself ; and yet both drop
And streamlet pass away without a trace
Into the valley, thence into the sea.
And yet no true word dies ; no seed is lost,
Tho' buried long. In places and at times
Least looked for, it reveals its hidden life.

' Strange schools of earth, in which the heirs of heav'n
Are trained and taught. Sore lessons these we learn—
Hard for the heart, but harder for the will,
Beat into us by bitter discipline.
The emptying more difficult we find
Than all the filling ; the rubbish-heaps
Resist displacement from the well. Undoing
Taxes our will more heavily than doing ;
Passive endurance frets us more than toil.
We wonder at the length of chastisement ;

Our weaknesses we know not, nor believe
That pain can strengthen, and that heavenly fruit
Can ripen in the dark, or that the trees
Of God are braced by the cold winds of time.
He who to manhood grows without a grief
Is but half-rooted ; with a will untamed
And self undisciplined, he seeks his own.
To him no mellowness of being comes.
First taste the bitter and then drink the sweet,
So shalt thou sweetness know. First face the storm,
So shalt thou know the gladness of the calm.

‘Such is the heavenly order here below.
God means it so ; tho’ often in the dark
He worketh, and men see not what He does,
Or what He aims at. But it comes at length ;
Age after age uncoils itself, and drops
From the long skein of past eternities.
Each little life of man, each longer life
Of nations, is the evolving of a purpose
Too deep for us to fathom. Yet we live
As if the universe were ours, and man
The mighty potentate, whose sovereign will
Might do or undo, build up or destroy.
The spirit of the age has never been
Upon the side of God. Who would be true
To the great Voice above, must learn to brave
And not to foster or to lead that spirit ;
Against, not *with*, the torrent he must steer ;
To fight, not to obey, the imperious breeze ;
Quick to discern the true significance
Of each new phase of action or of thought.

Self-nurtured, self-instructed, and self-ruled,
The giddy peoples of this drunken earth
Are all astir and rampant ; each his flag
Of liberty unfurls, and marches on,
With progress as his banner-word aloft,
Waving amid the shouts of victory,
To some unknown and mist-encompassed goal.
The frantic falsehoods of delirious seers,
Who teach us that the Christ need not have died,
Or tell us that the Christ has not yet come,
Are listened to like heavenly oracles.
And how shall all this doing be undone,
These words unsaid, and the true speech of God
Go over earth, supplanting human lies ?
And how shall creaturehood be lifted up
Into a stedfast rest, that shall secure
Its various parts of matter and of mind
Against another fall, it may be, more
Dark and complete ? How shall we be assured
That no unlooked-for ruin shall o’ertake
Its glory and perfection as at first ?

‘Twice over has its well-made axle snapped :
Once when the angels sinned, and once again
When our first father fell, and with him drew
This perfect earth. And what man did of old,
Man shall undo,—the Man whom God hath sent,
And yet shall send again, when earth has reached
Maturity of evil. With Him comes
Stability for creaturehood ; the new
And perfect order of that universe,
Whose axle, forged upon no human anvil,

And tempered with no earthly heat and cold,
Shall never break again nor loose its hold.
The Christ of God becomes the living centre
Of all things ; men and angels, heaven and earth,
Now gravitate to Him, and in Him find
Eternal being, steadfast as His own,
Divine security for bliss like His,
With whom they now are one for evermore.

‘ Brief is the sternest discipline of time,
Its aim and end perfection ; step by step
We rise even when we seem to sink, grow strong
Even when we seem to faint, and win the fight
When all things are against us ; one by one
We do the life-work God assigns to us,
And wait the issue. ’Tis not by the strong
In numbers, or in weapons, or in skill,
That God has won the battles of the earth,
But by the single arm that took its power
From Him alone, in conscious helplessness,
Confronted with the hosts of evil here.
’Tis with the few and feeble that God sides ;
The bruised reed or shepherd’s sling is all
The weapon which faith asks for, when the hosts
Of darkness muster. Armed with such as these,
Calmly she marches on without a fear
To the great battle-field which angels watch,
Spectators of the strife and victory.

‘ Brief battle ! though to weary combatants
Full long it seems. Short day of toil, tho’ sore
To those who bear the burden and the heat
Of the oppressive noon. This broken spirit

Looks for the great upbiding ; this worn frame
Sighs for the rest, in silent sympathy
With all creation, whose deep groans it hears
And answers, longing for the promised age,
When nature, long unhealed, shall feel the touch
Of priestly hands to renovate and bless.
The disinfectant of the world's foul air
Is on its way : the Healer comes at length.
He speaks, and the world's fever passes off ;
Earth's primal health and peace return ; the voice
That said to the dark tempest, " Peace, be still,"
Speaketh again ; creation owns the voice,
Sea, sky, and earth subsiding into calm,
The lightning sheathed, the thunder heard no more.

' Loud tho' the blast be, it will fall at last,
And out of it the genial zephyr comes.
Let fall the anchor till the gale be o'er ;
Ride out the hurricane, then speed thee on ;
Or better still, fill all thy sails with it,
That it may bring thee sooner to thy haven.
The wildest storm that ever rent the air,
The fiercest earthquake that has ever shaken
Earth's cities into chaos, never moved
This solid globe from its smooth, silent course.
So let the storms pass over us, and so
Let life's most perilous earthquakes spend their strength.
We move along to our appointed goal,
In the long afterhood of coming time,
Unswerving on our orbit, undisturbed
By shocks that vibrate over land and sea.

' Live so as to be missed, it has been said ;

So shall this life of thine prove truly great.
Live so as thou shalt not be missed, I say,
So shall thy life approve itself still greater
And more complete. The pilot is not missed
When the tossed vessel in the harbour rests ;
September doth not miss the sower's hand,
If he hath nobly done his work in spring ;
We do not miss the sun of yesterday,
Nor shall we miss to-day's when comes to-morrow.

‘There is but one true Sower ; He hath done
His work for ever, not to be done again.
He sowed, we reap,—’tis well ; and yet again
We sow and others reap ; so goes the round
Of the great work of God on earth, each man
Knit to the other, and all knit to Him
Who is the centre of all work and life.

‘Compassed about with miracles, we move
Across this earth, beneath that watchful sun.
The mighty things of sight and sound and touch
Gird us like mountains ; we in midst of them
So poor and little. Undiscovered beauty
Hideth in ambush everywhere, ere long
To come forth in its fulness ; on each side
Perfection unenfolded, waiting for
The day of the unfolding ; life-wells filled,
And ready to o’erflow, when the quick touch
Of potent influence from long pent-up love
Shall let their fulness loose to do its work
Upon a world where only death has reigned.

‘Dead nature is not God ; and living nature
Is no mere thing of law, without a will,

Insentient all, developing itself
In blind submission to some innate force.
Oh, is the living music of the earth,
Are the deep harmonies of night and day,
The thrush's carol on the evening elm,
The turtle's low note from the olive-bough,
Or, sweeter still than all of these, the voice
Of man and woman as it utters all
The hidden melodies of human hearts,—
Are these all soulless, force and matter all ?
Mere steam-power motions ?—hammer-strokes upon
Dull rock or iron ?—fate-begotten sounds,
Whose heavy clank reveals nor mind nor will ?'

BOOK VII.



‘BUT let me tell about the babe I spoke of,
My one remaining flower.

The sweets of earth
Had lost their sweetness now. To me its joys
Were only like the summer stars, that shine
Briefly and faintly, lost in other light
Just gone below the horizon’s edge, or like
The wanness of the alabaster moon,
That tries to outshine the sun. But in him life
Seemed to come back again. No after-joys
Pluck from the head the grey hairs sown by sorrow;
And yet he was a staff to lean upon,
A well of sparkling water in the waste.
’Twas something to have him to live for here;
To have the young fair face to look upon,
Where rich fresh being sat on rosy lips,
The cheek of childhood bright as apple-bloom;
To have him with me in my daily walks,
He upon me and I on him still leaning,
Inseparable. And still I seem to see
His slender frame and mark his airy tread,
Graceful as the light step of mountaineer,
All childhood in its motion. We set forth

When the grey wind of morning shook the heath
And gathered up its fragrance for the lark,
Whose notes came trickling down the sunlight, meet
Reward for song. That song was his and mine ;
We loved it as we loved the starry dew
Beneath our feet upon the mountain steep ;
We loved it for its purity and love ;
It seemed the melody of light itself,
Of light beyond the clouds,—far-travelled song,
The outer echo of some heavenly chord,
Inaudible in this our lower sphere.

‘Years have been drifting onward, and the child
Has overtaken boyhood ; and the boy,
His cheek aglow with the rich red of dawn,
Has softly budded into dreaming youth,—
The youth of fervour, quick with throbbing thought,
Thinking of what he yet may be or do :
For as age looks behind, so youth before
Gazes with greedy eye ; both flee the present,
And both prefer the distant to the near,
And both would drink of fountains far away.
Gay hopes, like sunbeams, fill the fervid air,
And the warm pulse rises to fever-heat.
He drains the cup which only once we taste
In its delicious overflow of sweetness,—
The cup which comes unbidden and unsought,
Filled with strange nectar for the thirsty lip,—
Love’s summer-joy, the hydromel of time,
As in bright haste it passes swiftly by,
And touches, as it goes, youth’s burning tongue.

'Life's pillared vestibule, thick-wreathed with bay,
And sweet with odours of the morn, has now
Been passed. He has gone in, with song and smile,
Into the temple, knowing not what there
Of good or ill may be revealed to him.

'Then breaks the dream, and the absorbing spell
Loosens its hold upon the quivering brain.
False life, like vapour, vanishes ; the true
Is waking up ; the boy is putting on
The man. The falling blossoms now prepare
For being's large development, the fruit,
To which the slow and varying processes
Of unripe life were working silently ;
For not at once awoke the life divine,
So long within him struggling, but suppressed.
'Twas not the sudden burst of tropic sun ;
'Twas not the sleeper's instant start at dawn,
When from his couch he springs to meet the morn,
Emerging from night's many-coloured dreams
Or sullen mists into the tranquil sunshine :
Not thus it was that life awoke within him,
The life that dies not when all else has died ;
But slowly, as the spirit of the dawn
Thro' the wan twilight struggles into day.

'Now light, now darkness, spread themselves above
The feverish ocean of his sleepless mind ;
Shadow and sunshine strove for mastery.
All yesterday was calm, to-day the gale
Has dragged his anchors ; all true things this hour
Fill him, thrust out the next by all things false.
The certain and uncertain fought within him,

Each for entire dominion, satisfied
With nothing save the whole surrendered soul.
Real and unreal, wide and narrow, mist
And brilliant noonshine, mixed, or side by side,
All came and went, and came and went again ;
Were welcomed, then dismissed, caressed, then loathed,
As, with new aspect and new argument,
Hour after hour they plied their varied art,
Soliciting his early faith and love.

“ Lie down amid the gardens of the earth,
And spread the rose-leaves under you ; there rest
Amid the odour and enchantment which
The magic sunshine wakens up around ;
Feed on the lotus-leaf, and drink thy fill
Of pleasure's purple cup, o'erbrimming here ;
Live upon creature-loveliness and love ;
Enjoy the beauty of this siren world,
Locked in its arms and surfeited with song,
Apart from toil and tempest ; isolate
Thy life from other lives, fence off thyself
From the rough desert of humanity,
Or draw a curtain round thee to shut out
The ruggedness that mars thy silken rest ;
Chase the rude darkness from thee, and sit down
To festival 'neath midnight's glowing lamps ;
Woo nature to be gentle, and to give
The calm of night without the gloom, the flush
Of noon without its sultriness, the breath
Of the gay breeze without its angry fire,
And make once more a Paradise below.”
So whispered from within a silver voice,

And straight he sought to follow, full of hope.
Others had tried all this, and only failed,
But he might better prosper. Every effort
Needs not to end in failure ; some may find
The undiscovered islands of the blest,
Brighter Hesperides than those of which
Old poets oft had sung, unvexed with storm,
Unvisited with pain or mortal weakness ;
Where disappointment comes not, and where fear
Of a dark future is unknown ; where death
Has no dominion, but where life, all fair,
Brightens without a change thro' dateless days,
And all is health untainted : why should man
Live but to suffer and to toil and die ?
Must the old human heartache still remain
Uncured ? Must the old fever of the brain
Send its hot poison thro' the helpless soul
Without the assuaging anodyne ? If this
Be human destiny, then he at least
Will be above it. For shall his fresh life,
Full of far-ranging thoughts and unsung songs,
Be scattered like the sea-spray, or absorbed
Like starlight in the greedy clouds of morn ?
Shall his great plan dissolve or die unspoken,
Like the unchiselled statue, held in bonds
Within its marble prison-house, from which
Only some master's touch can set it free ?
Shall he, like the great Titan on the cliff
Of Caucasus, look helpless down upon
A suffering race, himself a sufferer too,
Under the pressure of some will or law

Which ought to be resisted, not obeyed,
Which, as unrighteous, ought to be repealed ?

‘No ; he will search the hidden cause of evil,
And having searched, undo it, setting free
This fate-chained earth with its long-burdened race,
Infusing health into its languid veins,
And every ill expelling, even the last,—
The death that darkens all things ; every part
Moulding to beauty, making perfect all
That is imperfect, taking out the sting
Which has so long been left to rankle deep
And poison all creation. He will be
The prism, which with the occult energy
Of its dissevering force spreads softly out,
Like beaten gold, the riches of the light,
Braided in sevenfold lustre. Shall the dust
He treads upon be lord of him who treads it,
And in self-will defy the will of man,
Or yield obedience to some canon dark,
Some law of mystery, which baffles mind
To fathom or to foil ? What though he should
Perish in such a work ? It would be well,
If o’er his tomb a new world should be built,
Freer and more amenable to man,
Less subject to a superhuman will ;
With broader laws, and rescripts less severe
To human frailty ; th’ evil and the good
Less sharply and less sternly separated ;
The penalties less harsh and rigorous,
Death’s ancient and inexorable statute
Repealed for ever ; disease expelled, and pain ;

The processes of nature made to work
More wisely, and with less of waste ; no sands
Of idle barrenness ; no obstructive cliffs
Sundering the nations ; no unthrifty clouds
Raining upon the sterile wilderness,
Or yet more sterile sea ; no withered leaves,
And no abortive blossoms ; no chill plains
Of numbing ice, and no intemperate sun
Scorching the blood ; no sharp rebellious fork
Of fiery lightning, tearing into shreds
The great Creator's handiwork, undoing
What had been done, unmaking at a stroke
What had been made of beauty and of strength.

‘He would not live for self. The generous sun
Illumines not himself ; the city lamp
Flings all its light upon the passers-by,
And then gives place to the eclipsing dawn ;
The river flows not to refresh itself,
But dies in watering others. So will he
Go forth upon a mission of brave love,
Be a great power on earth against all ill,
Drain the rank moisture of this marshy globe,
And make it all one fair Elysium.
He will beat down all error, lift up truth ;
He will expose all hollowness, and be
The model of the real in this untrue
And shallow world ; he will bring down his axe
Upon all folly, or in men or states,
On all misrule and wrong : let the globe crack,
And the high archway of the vaulted heavens
Dissolve ; what matters it, so justice lives ?

His walk thro' earth, on to the infinite
Beyond, shall be the burning march of truth,
Part of a long torch-lighted way, or part
Of the great causeway of the universe,
Stretching far up and on, he knew not whither,
Amid celestial avenues of stars,
That blaze on either side like lamps by night
And suns by day ; a wondrous prophet-march,
A great self-sacrifice, to tell for ever
On a self-loving and luxurious world !

‘Nobly he wrought, but wrought in vain ; it was
Not one thing, but a thousand, that refused
To be amended by his zealous love.
The one rebellious stone of Sisypheus,
Rebounding and rebounding to the vale,
Was nothing to the innate, inscrutable power
Which met and thwarted him. He was as one
Bent upon smoothing ocean's myriad wrinkles ;
All that he did seemed vain,—the work of one
Trying to chain the tempest, tame the thunder,
Or quench the fierce volcano's furnace-fires.
He felt himself alone, in front of some
Huge but invisible power that mocked his strokes.
Some deeper law than he could understand,
With headlong but most calm resistlessness,
Impelled this dark confusion on and on,
Like thunder-rack before the unseen breeze ;
Some unknown code of everlasting rule,
Working with secret certainty and force,
And giving forth the inexorable canons
Of a deep-seated Nemesis, that crossed

All other laws, and would not be defied
Or disenchanted ; a stupendous will,
Embodying persistent righteousness,
And by relentless pressure urging on
All human things to some still future hour
Of grander retribution, when the Judge,
At the assize which yet shall right all wrongs,
And place eternal good upon the throne,
Shall deal with the dark annals of the race,
And by His sentence in that day of truth
Shall bring to light the all-impelling law,
Which had in awful muteness been at work
Thro' ages past, deep in creation's core,
Ordering and yet disordering all things here,
Both good and evil, regulating, yet
Perturbing every orbit, as by some
Invisible magnet, which no power nor skill
Of man can reach to neutralize or bind.

‘Not in great things alone he fought and failed.
The little things that lay in the plain path
Of daily life perplexed him most : they seemed
So feeble, yet so stubborn in resistance,
So slight, and yet they mastered him. He might not
Have wondered that the storm refused his sway ;
That the red eye of war still glared, and still
Her armies mustered, steeping earth in blood ;
Or that the hollow and discoloured cheek
Of pestilence, or the clean teeth of famine
Still showed themselves, as in the ages past ;—
But why should this poor poisonous reptile breed
And crawl upon the soil which man calls his,

Only to carry pain and death to man ?
Why should this worthless weed grow all unsown,
Or the keen thorn shoot from the branch unsheathed ?
Why should so many tears fall hotly down,
So many hopes lie buried in the sand,
So many joys like early spring-blooms die ?

‘ The mighty and the mean things of the earth
Yield to some living universal statute :
Not fate, but conscious, ever-acting will,
Wise, just, and loving, everywhere at work
Where least observed ; some influence
Which worketh not by chance, but overpowers,
Armed with the Judge’s mighty fiat, all
Opposing wills, in awful righteousness
Revealing God’s eternal estimate
Of every evil thing ; with its most sure
And ever accurate tho’ noiseless touchstone
Testing each word and deed, and making known
The inevitable pain that tracks even now
Each devious step, and all the endless ills
Which, in a thousand forms, one small departure
From the perfection of the perfect rule
Brings over man and earth. The falling leaf
Troubles the air, and the vibration spreads
Wide over space. The feeble drop of blood
Falls on the ocean, and the crimson stain
Discolours each blue wave that swells or sinks
With the advancing or receding tide.

‘ Strong is the will of man ; but stronger still
This other will, veiled though it be, and voiceless,
That meets him like a spectre everywhere,

And brands the sin he would extenuate
As the mishap of weakness, with the strong
And never obsolete sentence of the Judge :
“ The soul that sinneth, it shall surely die.”

‘ And yet no Até, no Erinnyes here !
Nor fate, nor fury, binding heaven and earth,
Defying gods and men, as classic myth
Has sung, does this resistless will display.
It is the will of loving righteousness ;
Not jealousy of man and human joy,
As the far-travelled Greek would have us know ;
But the wise purpose, ever on the side
Of good, and wishing well to man in all
His sorrow or his joy, and hating only
The falsehood and the darkness and the sin.
The true God loveth truth ; His will,
Like a sharp ploughshare turning up the clods
Of earth, or like the strong invisible helm
Guiding the ship thro’ storm, brings us to good
Through the long ages of opposing ill,
In ways undreamt of by earth’s wisest souls.

‘ So found ere long the fond enthusiast,
Who sought out potent herbs to heal man’s wounds,
And to regenerate the worn-out world
With simples culled from its own fields, which have
No power to reach the core of human ill.
He failed, for evil was too strong for him ;
But yet, in failing, and returning home
Saddened, but yet not sour nor unbenign,
From unsuccessful warfare, learned to hope.
Anger and haste, they say, good counsel mar ;

And he sat calmly down to meditate
On that which has been, is, and yet may be,
Wiser and less impetuous than before.
He might be wrong, and he will patiently
Seek out the right and true ; tho' pride may murmur,
Better to ask the road than go astray ;
Better another's pilotage than shipwreck.

'One virus from the one sad tree of ill,
Eaten in Paradise, flows thro' our veins,
And taints our bodies with each dire disease,
Ending in death. One breath of withering frost,
Issuing from Eden, has gone thro' the ages,
And into winter changed our budding spring.
One foe let loose, the foe of man and God,
Has spread slow havoc wide and far among
Our mortal race. One seed dropped in our soil
Has covered this fair globe with bitter weeds.
Yet good as well as ill was in all this ;
And the great law came up, worthy of God,
Deeper than other laws, upon whose strength
The keystone of a comely universe
Fixes itself, and brings the arch together,
The law which seizes upon sin, and turns
Evil to good,—far wider, higher good
Than would have been ; and yet in doing so
Stamps every sin with the eternal curse.

'That silent law, that met him everywhere
And thwarted every plan, was just, tho' stern,
Was good, tho' fraught with sorrow ; and its course
Was upward, amid all the desolation
Which it was daily working, as in power

It forced itself along, a thing of dread,
Visible only in its strange results.
It had laid earth in ruins, filled the grave,
Broken ten thousand hearts ; yet it alone
Could build up earth again and calm its storms,
Empty the grave and heal the broken heart.
On it the new foundations of a fair
And stable universe are to be laid,
When love and righteousness shall take the throne,
And with perfection crown all creaturehood,—
Perfection higher far than at the first,
And stedfast thro' the everlasting age,—
An age which never sheds its leaves, nor finds
Its hair grow grey, nor its bright eye turn dim.

‘ Thus did he read the evil and the good,
And learned the meaning, understood the purpose,
Which like a living force lay wrapt in each ;
For each thing, framed by man or made by God,
Has different use. The anchor swimmeth not,
But holds the floating vessel ; the tall mast
Standeth immoveable, and yet becomes
The spring of stateliest speed ; the soil is dead,
And yet the seed that would yield up the life
Folded within its grain must there be sown ;
The breakers grind the rocks to sand, and are
Themselves controlled by the small sand they grind ;
The fire consumes the incense flung on it,
And yet in doing so draws out in sweetness
The breath that only fire can disimprison.

‘ Each well of earth (they said of old) contains,

Beneath it hid, a palace all of pearl,
In which the spirit of the sweet spring dwells :
So at the base of all the true and good
That wells up here there is a living power,
Perfusing and impregnating the waters,
Sending them forth to a thrice needy world
To quench all thirst and purify all stains.
He had digged down into these palaces,
To bring up to the light of day the life
That lies deep hidden underneath the soil ;
He had digged down, and failed. The god had fled,
Or had become invisible. He could not
Lay hold of him, to learn his secret, or
Compel him to obey another's will.

‘On such things musing, sober wisdom came
To him in his perplexity and fear.
Daily the deeper meaning of all things
Around him dawned. The voice within all these
External forms became articulate,
And spoke in power. He felt that he was but
An atom of the universe, sent here
To do another's will, and to fulfil
Another's purpose, in whose vast designs
There were no weaknesses and no mistakes.
Bowing the head, he took a humble place,
Unlearning his long folly, and retiring
From the bold enterprise he undertook,
The grand deliverance of humanity,
The restitution of a broken world.
He learned the helplessness of creaturehood,
And yet its strength for evil and for ruin.

Man quenches life, but cannot life replace,
Even in the insect which he treads upon.
An infant's hand can in a moment fire
A city, which ten thousand men of skill
And might cannot rebuild. The power for evil
Lodged in one human will surpasses far
Its power for good. For now six thousand years
Evil has fought with good, and good with ill ;
But which has conquered in the varying strife,
Upon whose issues hangs the eternal weal
Of this vast universe, once made so good ?

‘Twas thus he learned his own true part and work
(Meaner than once he thought, yet glorious still)
In turning the slow axle of the world,
Or lessening its evil and its sin.
Though not a sun, he might be still a ray ;
In solitary service, hour by hour,
And in prevailing fellowship with Him
Who at the fountain-head of being sits,
And to the good, says Come, and lo, it cometh ;
Who to the evil speaketh, Hence, depart ;
Thus far shalt thou prevail, but not beyond ;
He might in his own sphere exert a force
And do a work which no one else could do,
And which could nowhere else be done than in
The spot where he was placed. God's work is done
By each one doing his own part, though small,
In his own place, by keeping patiently
The orbit within which his motion lies :
Who quits the orbit of his mission, fails.

‘God's sword belongeth to Himself alone ;

Man may not wield it, nor so much as try
To draw it from the scabbard ; yet the day
Cometh most surely, when it shall leap forth,
And with its righteous edge do the strange work
Which has been left undone for ages. Now
It sleeps, or almost sleeps, save when in secret
And in slow silence, like a stealthy foe,
Moving along, it springs up suddenly,
In one dread moment finishing its work.
Mute is just vengeance ; without sound she strikes
The righteous blow and does her sacred work ;
As when she smote the Cities of the Plain,
And bid the sun shine down on Sodom's grave ;
Or when she showed Jerusalem the hosts
Of proud Assyria strewed like sand upon
Her western slopes, without the gleam of spear
Or sound of trumpet summoning to war.

‘Faith waiteth and is patient,—this he learned ;
It looks to unseen wisdom ; leans upon
An unseen will ; transports itself each day
From the dark turbulence and chaos here
Into a peaceful future ; makes no haste,
Assured that progress and perfection are
Too holy to be snatched at by rash man,
Who, in his fond ambition to be God,
And sit at once upon the throne of earth,
Rejects the tardy processes of time.
Faith sees their weary slowness, sees no less
The retrogression which so often tries
Its constancy. It hears the voice, Be still,
And it is still ; for, sure as sunrise, comes,

Though with slow march, the promise of the ages.
But reason is impetuous, and scorns
To wait for slow development and growth.
Earth's fires must be replenished, that they may
Burn faster and more fiercely ; ocean's tides,
Stately alike in tempest and in calm,
That from all ages have kept time, and marched
By royal law in every clime of earth
Backward and forward, must be hurried on ;
The creeping wheels of a belated world
Must in man's service be compelled to fly
At quicker pace, by science smoothed and oiled.
Ye planets, speed you, and ye lightning-bolts,
Strike quicker blows, man frets at your delay ;
Ye cataracts, precipitate your fall
With swifter rush ; ye rivers, run, and stay not
To dally with the willow drooping o'er you,
Or with your grassy fringe in wanton play ;
Ye winds, delay not ; ye fire-wingèd barques,
Urge on your race ; and ye swift-rolling wheels
That whirl along earth's iron pavements, fly
With sevenfold speed, like royal messengers:
Man is in haste, and ye his servants must
Loiter no more ; the goal is nearly reached.
He shall not surely die, but live, and be
As gods, that know the evil and the good,
Over both wielding high his sovereign sway.

‘ Conscious of ill and pain, yet knowing not
The source or cure, man walks the ruined earth,
Each day revolving plans that shall build up
Creation's shattered gates and levelled walls.

Each ruin is to him a hopeless riddle.
Whence came it, and how shall it be repaired ?
Who shall arrest the crumbling, or bring back
The far-swept atoms to their native block ?
Each fragment seems to represent a failure,
The torso of a sculptor, whose right hand
Has lost its cunning in the hour of need.
Why does he find so many tangled threads,
So many dislocated purposes,
So many morns without an eve, and eves
Without a morn or hope of rising sun,
So many ladders, and yet none to climb them,—
So many climbers waiting for a ladder,
So many failures in the race of life,
So many wasted immortalities,
So many dire eclipses of the soul
Under the sceptre of the Blessed One ?
What is the root of wormwood that embitters
All things below ? Or what the unquenched
torch,
That nightly seems to set the world on fire ?
Is it some deep inevitable flaw
In that which we call nature, or is it
Blindness or feebleness in nature's Lord ?
Or is it that all-penetrating poison,
Which man calls evil, but which God calls sin ?
Something whose hellish virulence eats in
To the most central core of human joy,
And dims the brilliance of its brightest gems,
Something profoundly dark, which creaturehood
Has summoned into being, but which only

He who is infinite can pluck away,
And banish beyond chance of dread return ?

‘ Man asks, but cannot answer, or, in answering,
Doubles the maze, makes the perplexity
Yet more perplexed ; then fretfully reproaches
The Framer of the fabric for endorsing
Laws that seem equally to curse and bless.
There is no key on earth which can unlock
The council-house of heaven. The key of gold,
Which opens wide each strong-barred gate below,
Availeth not above. The golden axe,
Which, they say, shatters even the iron door,
Is powerless here. No bribe or threat of man
Can draw the secrets out that everywhere
Lie hid in that which he calls history
And nature. Like the lyre of Egypt, they
Speak or are silent as the sun of dawn
Touches their cords or hides his magic beam.

‘ Oft has God spoken, but man closed his ear
Against all oracle or speech divine.
He has kept silence, and man heeded not,
Nor felt the awe which such a stillness claims.
Four centuries there were ere He, the WORD,
Came down to speak to man with man’s own
lips,

Out of the fulness of a human heart,
The undiscoverable thoughts of God,
And show the love that love alone can tell,—
Four solemn ages in which God kept silence.
No word from prophet or from seer to man
Dropt from His lips. The oracle was mute ;

The jewelled breastplate flashed not ; dream and vision
Alike were gone ; and the great shrine was still.

‘ God spoke not, that He might give fullest scope
For man to speak and utter all his wisdom.

Then Plato reasoned, Socrates, and all

The wise of Greece, poet and orator,

Philosopher and men of noble soul.

Man spoke, and spoke with eloquence and power ;

No rival near, no messenger of heaven,

To abash his boldness or to seal his lips,

Or drown his human voice with sounds divine.

‘ But yet the world by wisdom knew not God.

It wrestled but in vain, from age to age,

With the perversities of human life,—

The problems that defy all intellect

And all philosophy, or old or new.

It dreamed, and tho’ the dream was beautiful,—

Like Scipio’s, when the spheres sent forth their music,

And sung his spirit into harmony,—

It left the heart unfilled, the soul unblest,

Unpurged the conscience, unsubdued the will.

‘ Ilyssus bore the dreamer’s lays along

On its clear blue ; Hymettus, with its thyme,

Welcomed a honey sweeter than its own.

Brilessus beckoned to its woody bowers

The pensive strollers of the Academe ;

And Lycabettus echoed back the voice

Of eloquence that filled Athenian halls.

The olive-shades were listeners to the words

Of Attic thoughtfulness ; the sloping vines

Of Parnes hung their clusters o’er the heads

Of these deep-meditative men, when one,
And then another, and another still,
Conversed of things divine, groping their way
Through conscious darkness, throbbing thro' the soul
And saddening the brow, to something fair
That lay beyond it, and that looked like day ;
Guessing at truth, and picking up, or here
Or there, a few bright fragments, that but showed
How much lay undiscovered, and how much
Might one day be revealed to man, when, from
A loftier Olympus than they knew,
One should descend, to teach as never yet
Philosopher or poet had them taught :
With certainty the things of certainty
Proclaiming, from no fabled oracle
Of Delphi or Dodona ; uttering,
Not the " I think " of Athens or of Egypt,
But the " I know " of heaven ; saying to men,
As the old father notes, not " I am custom,"
Or " I am reason," but with majesty,
" I am the truth ; all wisdom is in me."

‘ Fair are thy slopes, O classic Attica !
Yet in these palmy days of ancient thought
And earnest questioning, they never heard
The key-note of divine philosophy,
That " God is light ; "—the music of the heart,
Passing all other music, " God is love."
One of themselves, a prophet of their own,
He of Eleusis, old Euphorion's son,
Who fought at Marathon and sung at Athens,
Has spoken words of gravest thoughtfulness,

Painting in stateliest majesty of verse
The firmament of God, the rushing winds,
The river-springs, old ocean's countless smile,
Our mother earth, the sun's all-seeing eye,
And the One God, invisible, supreme ;
Describing in his measured roll of song
The rock-chained Titan on the sea-swept cliff
Of barren Caucasus, condemned and lone,—
The vulture ever gnawing at his heart,
Till the great gulf of yawning earth receive him,
And he descends into the dread abyss,
With the strange prophecy proclaimed, that there
He must remain, until from heaven some god
Go down, and, entering Hades in his stead,
Shall bear his penalty and bring him up
From the dread Tartarus, to which his crime
Of God-defiance and self-will had doomed him,—
The crime of stealing light from heaven against
The will of Him who made him what he was,
And gave him earth for his inheritance.
Yet but a gleam was this of the high truth
That the sick conscience of humanity
Had long been groping for, to heal its wounds,—
A guess at the great coming fact, on which
The new foundations of the universe
Were to be laid,—God manifest in flesh,
The Just One for the unjust suffering doom ;—
A gleam, a guess, which penetrated not
The long, lone darkness which o'erhung that land
Of wonder and of loveliness, where once,
Amid the clusters of its marble shrines,

Man's sorrowing search for something to fill up
The blank within his soul, found resting-place
In the cold worship of the unknown God.
There was a fire upon the altar there
Of Pallas, ever burning up to heaven ;
But no one knew its meaning. There was blood
Of consecrated victims,—sprinkled blood,
And outpoured wine, and holy festival ;
But no one guessed their import, for the light
Was but a spark, which glimmered and was gone.

‘What could not Greece have done, if intellect,
Keen as the sword of Pericles, and bright
As the broad evening-star that sets upon
The sea of Salamis, when all the air
Is calm as heaven, could search the unknown ether,
And bring from its still depths the long-sought gems
Of everlasting light to man below ?
Or dive into the dread eternal deep,
To bring up pearls which would enrich for ever
The human spirit's deepest poverty ?

‘But Greece has failed ; her truest and her best
Have owned the failure. He who drank the hemlock,
The man of progress, far beyond his age,
Philosophy's first martyr and her last,
Sighed as he sat upon the sterile edge
Of the great sea of knowledge, and looked o'er
Its mist-bewildered face, so tempting-fair,
Without a barque or skiff to navigate
Its glorious regions, or explore its isles,
Or fetch its golden fleece from realms afar.
“All that I know is that I nothing know :”

This the confession of the noblest spirit
That, in these four mysterious centuries,
These ages of God's silence and man's speech,
Searched all the depths and heights of finite knowledge,
And with calm modesty and meekness owned
The failure of a lifetime's solemn search !

‘Era of human speech and thought, all song
And eloquence and overflow of mind,
How fair thy light, and yet how pale its ray !
Strewed with the sparks of many a noble torch
Or fire, that seemed as if it fain would burn,
But could not for the still and stagnant air ;
Gleams of a sun that would have shone, but could not ;
Meteors that lighted up no earthly path,
Nor led one spirit to the spirit's home ;
Nor bid the day-spring rise upon our race,
Nor gave one glimpse of resurrection-hope.

‘Era of mighty minds, which uncontrolled
Roamed over wisdom's widest fields, yet plucked
No flowers from islands of the blest, no balm
Of sweet and subtle medicine for the soul ;
Which breathed the scent of the far-wandering winds,
Whose breath is health, and yet found health in none.

‘Noon of the olden earth,—if such we may
Call your pale splendour, hardly worth the name
Of twilight,—vainly didst thou struggle with
The heavy gloom of time, evanishing,
And leaving man unblessed and undelivered.
Ah, surely in your heavens the light of life
Was not,—the sure and the unchanging life
That lightens man with its all-healing rays,

And shineth on unto the perfect day !
Love was not in your temples ; and your gods
Were gods of vengeance, despots of the sky.
We look to you in vain for charity,—
The charity that suffers long, and bids
Defiance to all hatred or revenge,—
The charity that gives all heaven to man,
And grudgeth not the gift beyond all price.
Your gods had other things to do than love ;
They had to feast, to quarrel, and to hate.
Your Jove was but the demon of the air,
Shedding on earth malignant influence,
And watching to destroy. You taught no love,
Nor could have taught it : he who would impart
Love's happy lessons must himself be love,—
Lesson and type and teacher all in one.

‘ The old Orient ruled the body, Greece the mind,
And Rome the will. But were the chains of sin
Thus broken, or the spirit lifted up
To breathe the freer and diviner air
Of everlasting truth and holiness ?
Great in the sword, in thought, in wit and song,
Did man emerge from their victorious rule
Nobler in being, higher, and more godlike ?
Or was this globe transformed to fruitfulness
And universal beauty by their touch ?

‘ Thus musing on the failures of the past,
And made at length to feel how impotent
His wisdom and his zeal against the powers,
Invisible and visible, of ill,
That made this earth a chaos, he begins

To think of light above his own ; of truth
Which in the end, by its own vital force,
Must prove omnipotent in conquering ill ;
Of an eternal purpose working out,
By slow but certain processes below,
A better, brighter history for earth,
In which himself shall have a part, tho' not
The proud pre-eminence that once he hoped.

' The once fond dreamer now has found his place,
And, like each part of what we nature call,
Does his own work, and fills up life with that
For which it had been given him, tho' at first
In his wild waywardness he saw it not.
'Tis a true life that now he lives ; a life
That tells upon the world, as tells the wind
Invisibly upon the swelling sail ;
As tells the oar upon the boat's sure progress.
Brought into conflict with a power of ill
Beyond his strength to cope with, he falls back
Upon that power which wields the wind and wave,
That rouses, like a lion from its lair,
The dormant hurricane, then says, " Be still,"
Or bids the strong cliff countercheck its rage.

' Within the fortress of Almighty strength
He hides himself when tempests are too strong ;
Or goeth forth in weakness, yet in trust,
To wield that strength against the mighty foe.
" They say that prayer is vain," so wrote he once ;
" Or at the best a needful utterance
Of pleasant feeling or of pent-up grief ;

The solemn music of the inner man
When gazing on a greater than himself.
Not so to me did it appear : I saw
That if there be a God there must be prayer ;
The invisible conversing with the seen,
The seen with the invisible ; the child
Clasping the parent's hand, and looking up
For succour and for fellowship. I saw
In prayer the limits of my narrow being,
The line where finite touches infinite,
And where the seen looks out on the unseen ;
The point where God meets man and man meets God
In palpable fellowship, one loving heart
Throbbing upon another like its own ;
The point where strength meets weakness, weakness
strength ;
Where man receiveth, and God giveth all
That man can ask or think ; that wondrous shrine
Of true oracular question and response.
It did not seem to me incredible
That the same God who gave me this vast soul
Should speak with me, and suffer me to speak
With Him, as friend with friend ; rather would it
Have seemed incredible that He who made me
Should bar all intercourse, and mock the soul
That He had made, with everlasting silence,—
Answering no question, sitting far apart,
Like the chill statue of some marble god,
Dumb as the dead, and heedless of the cries
That His own creatures raise. Rather would I
Worship the vocal sea, or fruitful sun,

Or speaking star, that, with its love-bright eye,
Has whispered gladness these six thousand years
To troubled man, than such a god as this,
Who made me, yet who spurns me from His presence;
Who knows my sorrows, but refuses still
To let me pour them out into His bosom;
Who hears my cries as tho' He heard them not;
My woes unpitied and unrecognised,
Myself a wandering atom, made in sport,
To sport with, not to bless,—He all the while
Sitting in self-enjoyment or repose,
Not answering, but mocking; at the best,
Like rock that sendeth back in resonant scorn
The useless echo, dying in mid-air."

' He lived to bless me; and not me alone,
But others. Trained for special work on earth
By Him who needed such an instrument,
For a brief season he fulfilled his day;
He did his work, and laid himself to rest
Upon the bosom of his earthly sire,
Departing with the golden cloud, that melts
From the still blue as we are gazing on it,
And wondering, as we gaze, how such a glory
Should ever cease to be, or, having ceased,
Should ever re-appear and shine anew
With its old glory in a gentler sky.

' Each deathbed is a mystery and a fear,
Even when the sting is gone. And when I think
Of earth's unnumbered deathbeds, which each day
Draw the disconsolate eyes of loving friends

To watch the couch of pain and weariness,
I say, What mean these rendings of the heart ?
And how shall I unwind my tangled steps
From the dark labyrinth of human grief,
And brightly rise into that realm of life
Where what we love shall never pine and die ?

‘ So did I reason when my child of love,
My boy of sorrow and of hope, lay down
In manhood’s prime to sleep the blessed sleep.
I sat beside him in his troubled hours
Of long, long pain. Dear hours of watchfulness
To me, in that dim chamber where he tossed
From night to night, until the angel came
That bore him hence. Peace like a hidden spring
Welled up within him, tho’ the flesh was weak ;
The cross was lighting up the vale of death
With its all-stedfast radiance. Joy was there.
The piercing nails had gone thro’ other hands,
And his had not a scar. The rending thorns
Had torn another’s brow, and he was free.
The angry spear had in another’s side
Sheathed its sharp point, and he unwounded lay.
He tossed and moaned ; then looking up and up,
As if he saw into the far unseen,
Sighed to be free. Once and again I heard
His *nunc dimittis* breathed from pale, parched lips.
Oh, my chained eagle ! when wilt thou take wing ?
I said, tho’ loth to part. At length there came
The messenger of life to bid him go.
He went from earth ; could I but wish him joy ?
I closed his eyes and smoothed his silken hair,

Then kissed his forehead, laid my lips on his,
With the close pressure of heart-breaking love.
It was a bridal kiss,—just such an one
A mother gives her darling when about
To leave the dwelling of her childhood for
An untried home, where love will sweeten all.
A few sore struggles brought deliverance,
And then the sweet long calm : the storm was done ;
'Twas but the rattle of the falling links ;
The chain was broken, and the spirit free.
He did not weep ; the dying never weep,
The tread of coming death dries up the fount ;
He did not weep, 'twas I that shed the tears.

‘ Farewell ! I follow soon ; then we shall meet
Where the full fellowship of heart with heart
Shall never sunder as they sunder here,—
Shall never lose their freshness and their joy.

‘ How poor his death has left me, I must not
Essay to tell ; how dark my dwelling now,
Since the sad hour when its last light went out,
None save myself can know. Few understand
Deep sorrow ; fewer care to be beside it ;
For the world loves not sackcloth, hides its eyes
From dust and ashes, fears the name of death,
Shuns the mute mourner in his day of tears,
Thrusts away all that mars its festive mirth,
Or mocks the music of its reckless song.

‘ Thus sorrow struck me with its two-edged sword,
And life was rent asunder ; one-half here,
And one above, with those who have gone up

To wait for me till we shall meet on high.
The cloud is o'er me, and within I feel
The daily bleeding of a hidden wound,
That neither time nor skill avail to stanch.
Often I go to their last place of rest
Beneath the turf ; last place of earthly rest
Till life shall come, and all my buried gems
Be plucked from the old spoiler's robber-grasp.
I walk amid the tombstones, touching each
With this old staff, as one who drops a line
Into some ancient well, and listens hard
To learn how deep it is. For graves are deep ;
Deeper than eyes have seen ; each one of them
Linked with the depths and heights of realms unknown.
And as we look at them, or hear the voice
Of the low wind, that, as it passes o'er,
Makes melancholy music, we go in
Thro' the low gates into the wide expanse
Of light that lies beyond, into whose joy
Our loved have entered, beckoning us to come.

‘ We love to hide our grief, or fear to show it,
As if too sacred for the common eye ;
Yet not the less we cherish it ; perhaps
To give it out to God in prayer, to man
In song, and to ourselves in silent thought.
Each dwelling has its cloud, without, within ;
Earth's proudest cities know what sorrow is.
And yet it speaks not in the multitude
Of voices that we hear ; we walk the streets,
Yet see it not ; we pass its very door,
Yet hear it not. Deep, deep down hides the grief

That is the truest ; we must seek for it
If we would find it and bind up its wounds.
Joy puts the trumpet to its lips, and makes
The city ring with shout and song and mirth.

‘ But ’twill not now be long. The storms are done,
And the last breaking wave has spent itself.
The winds are dying into peace, and morn
Smiles down upon me from the hills of home.
Life’s weather-broken barque has safely reached
The long-sought bay ; the worn-out keel at length
Grazes the strand. I leap to land, and find
Myself at last upon the stormless shore.’

BOOK VIII.

‘FROM this calm desert let me date these lines’
(So writes a wanderer whom we knew in youth,
Who after uneventful years lay down
To rest beneath Geneva’s sycamores).
‘The sands are all about me ; the nude rocks
With checkered peaks are watching for the dawn,
Whose tide of radiance now begins to flow,
After the ebb of night, and to steal up
With sweet obtrusion on the shaded air.

‘I am alone ; and for a time at least
I love to be so. Cares are for the crowd,
And here I part with them. Not that I turn
My back upon the race, as if to leave
All love behind me ; and yet would I seek
A time of breathing and a place of rest,
To fit me for the after-work of life,
The service, or the trial, or the toil ;
And here, in this unutterable calm,
I find the freshening which my spirit needs.

‘I watch in silence every change, and mark
Yon burst of radiance from the unrisen sun,
That like a billow breaks against the morn ;
Then springing upwards in divided wreaths,

Scatters its spray of beauty o'er the hills,
Braiding with its unearthly gold the clouds
That hang like tresses on the brow of dawn.
All leisurely the day is coming up,
Like one assured of welcome ; o'er the sands
The languid under-breeze is stealing by,
Scarce ruffling one of these acacia leaves.
O calm without a name, so sweet, so deep !
O wondrous air, so sparkling, so serene !

‘ The skies are bluest when they bend above
The blue wide ocean ; they are purest when
They stretch across a wilderness like this,
Where man is not, and where no city-smoke
Stifles the noon, and dulls its trembling blue.
Man is polluting all the streams of earth :
Its very seas send shoreward with a sigh
The murky wave, no longer hyaline.
A veil, but not of night, nor swift eclipse,
Bedims the sun. Beauty and odour flee
The pale-faced flowers. With boughs of tarnished green
The forests droop. The showers have lost their freshness,
The snow its maiden splendour, and the breeze,
Or from the rising or the sinking sun,
Comes, with its tainted breath, to blanch the cheek
And take the blossom from youth's budding spring.

‘ But here, in this untainted wilderness,
The far-spread poison ceases ; not a trace
Of living influence, for good or ill,
To tell of him whose hand, however skilful,
Ne'er touches but it mars, or leaves the trail
As of a serpent on the soil it tills !

‘Land of lone silence, over which there breaks
No city-murmur in the busy morn,
When millions rise to labour ; whose still nights
(So still that one might hear the moonbeams fall,
Or the soft dew alight, hour after hour,
Upon the acacia leaves or ritten bloom)
No sighing sick-bed and no tears disturb ;
Where neither death nor life is seen around ;
Where no voice meets you with its “ Hush, be still,
For death is on that couch, within these curtains :
Tread softly lest you should disturb the dead.”
Land of strange muteness, where the camel’s hoof
Or foot of the half-sandalled Bedawi
Raises no echo ; where the bleat of flocks,
Or shepherd’s call, or song of sleepless streams,
Is all unheard ! How I stand here and gaze
In silence, like your own, upon these wastes,
As if afraid to breathe ; then looking up
Into your lucid heavens, as if to scale
The summit of that bright miraculous arch,
Whose keystone is the star that never sets,
Whose base the sweep of these unending sands.

‘This is Arabia ! That the mount of God,
Whose granite peaks, bathed in descending flame,
Once shook as God came down, and the loud blast
Of trumpets filled the unaccustomed air.
Here would I sit beneath the spiky boughs
Of this acacia, and gaze all around.
The tread of millions once amid these rocks
Was heard ; but that has long since passed away.
A liberated nation sung its songs,

Reared its new altar here, and daily drenched
These dead dry sands with sacrificial blood.
But every stain of blood or trace of ashes
Has vanished in the wind and rain of ages.
A liberated nation sung its songs
Amid these valleys, but the strain has died.
A noble priesthood waved its censers here,
Fair with fresh gold, and glistening with new gems,
Sending from these into the virgin air
A fragrance never known on earth before,
Sweetness as perfect as it was divine.

‘ And here the pillared glory, dwelling-place,
Chariot, and throne of Him who fills the heavens,
Blazed in its cloudy brightness, day and night ;
A sun, a shield, a keeper, and a guide !
It, too, is gone, and the sun smites the sand,
Without a cloud between : the wilderness
Is poorer than before ; for He who pitched
For forty years His tent above its wastes
Has left it, to return no more until
He comes as new-Creator of the earth.
Then shall this desert blossom as the rose ;
Its rocks shall gush with living springs and streams ;
The cedar and the myrtle and the olive
Shall cover its grey sands ; like Eden then,
Earth’s long-lost garden, shall it all become,
And these fierce hungry rocks, like skeletons
Of the dead mountains of a former world,
That rise on every side, shall clothe themselves
With verdure such as Sharon knoweth not,
Nor Lebanon in greenest springs hath seen.

‘ Here the new river rushed from the deep cleft
Of the parched flint to quench a nation’s thirst,
Went thro’ the desert with the chosen race,
Then disappeared, in silent mystery,
To the deep source from which it first welled out,
Its happy embassy of love fulfilled ;
As if the angel of the waters had
Beckoned it forth, then beckoned it away.

‘ Here, too, the unknown manna daily rained
Celestial food, angelic sustenance ;
And man on earth did eat the bread of heaven ;
A better than the best of earthly food,
And pledge of food more true and more divine,
The bread of God, the everlasting bread
Which whoso eateth hungers never more ;
Bread for the famine of a hungry world,
The soul’s true provender, which giveth life
Above all human life to them who eat.
Be that bread ever mine ; and let all else
Pass by untasted ; nothing else can fill ;
No more I need ; no less can satisfy.

‘ This way the millions marched, and here they
rested,—
The host of the oppressed, set free, and yet
Unused to battle, with the broken links
Of Egypt’s fetters on their weary limbs.
Here the Phœnician Amalek swept down
For spoil and havoc. On yon hill, that like
A sentinel looks down upon this plain,
The Hebrew leader sat with lifted rod,
Till, like the sand before the hurricane,

The desert foe was scattered to the night,
And, like the Egyptian chariots, seen no more.

‘Here stood the altar, where the blood of peace
Was shed and sprinkled ; meeting-place between
The nation and its God, where heaven and earth
Embraced each other ; the long-wandered son
And the still loving Father reconciled,
Each in the other’s arms fast locked together,
Only the blood between, at that strange spot
Of the eternal peacemaking, where death
Gives place to life, and love gets unchecked vent
To all its yearnings o’er the sons of men.

O tide of love, flow in and on, till I
Am covered with thy gladness ! Thee I need
To bear me thro’ the conflict. Righteous love,
Fill this unrighteous soul ; and let thy joy
Abide with me, as at the altar I
In peace stand looking on the face of God.

‘Here was the feast of love, where God and man
Sat down together, of one common loaf
Eating, and of one cup, with wine of heaven
Filled day by day, partaking in their joy.
The crowds of earth far off : no Egypt now
To break the silence of these lonely sands,
Or mar the intercourse, or draw the heart
Of man from God by its attractive grace.—
O earth, how strong ! O human face, how fair !
How treacherous the beauty of all things
Beneath the light of this soft-smiling sun !
O comeliness of creaturehood, what power
Is in thee to bewilder ! Voices sweet

Of man and woman, how ye win the ear,
And close it against melody divine !
I feel that I must be alone, ere I
Be not alone ; and it is here I find
The one companionship that satisfies ;
It is the crowd that makes the solitude ;
This desert is not loneliness to me.

‘ Strange legends, too, of later days, affix
Their marvels to each wizard cliff around.
Yon crimson peak, and yon tall yellow spire ;
And that green belt that girds the precipice,
And these lone palms of moonlight, that drink up
The scanty moisture of this burning soil ;
This solitary graveyard with its stones,
Unhewn and interfringed with desert-broom,
Whose history no wanderer can tell ;
That dried-up well, to which the traveller comes
In vain for water to his withered lips ;
That pale-faced rock, that like a minaret
Lifts itself, but on which or day or night
No watcher sits and no muezzin calls,—
All have their names and stories. Well they seem
Fitted for fable, so magnificent
And so unearthly do they show themselves
In starlight or in sunshine. Not the like
Doth earth contain of haggard majesty.

‘ That old fantastic ruin is the place
Of buried gold ; and underneath that rock
Are gardens which would make a Paradise
(So tells the Bedawi the solemn tale

His fathers, and his father's fathers told).
On yon weird boulder strange lights have been seen
By wanderers, that point to hidden gems.
That cairn contains the bones of one who left
A name for blood behind him, and on it
Each Arab, as he passes, pours his curse.
That other heap retains a gentler name,
To which with softer voice he says, *Lie still*.

‘They say that to yon peak, that shooteth up
Like rugged splinter of a giant's lance,
And sparkles in the blue of awful night
As if some star had lighted on its top,
Two maidens climbed, each with a broken heart,
And, in the frenzy of love's dark despair,
Twining their raven tresses into one
Indissoluble braid, with close-linked arms
Flung themselves down that hideous pinnacle,
Inviting all the vultures of the rocks
To come and feed upon their quivering limbs.

‘Close by yon tiny spring, that wanders out
From the bare slope, and like an angel smiles
In the brown desert, rises sharp and high
A ponderous wedge of everlasting rock,
Barring all access once. A sword, men say,
(Men to whom fable is bright history,
And who have clothed their rocks with glowing dreams),
A swift miraculous sword clave it in twain,
And formed a gateway never to be closed,
Thro' which the wanderer might pass in and drink
Of the clear water, as it shines and smiles ;
A thing of life in this lone world of death.

Fair fountain, clearer than Bandusian spring,
Tho' rocks be all thy shelter, and the sand
Thy only margin ! Yet a clearer fount
I know, from deeper rocks than these upwelling,
To cheer the desert with its crystal flow.

' They point to two strange cells, the one hard by
The other, where still lie in ghastliness
The bones of two who sought to spend their lives
In prayer. A chain, reaching from cell to cell,
Linked them, and when the one lay down to rest,
The hard chain drew the other up to pray.
Thus day and night they toiled thro' a dark life,
Amid the echoes of these solitudes ;
As if to pray were better than to do ;
As if to groan were better than to love ;
As if the God, upon whose altar day
By day they laid their never-ending cries,
Were some stern Jupiter, who loved them not,
And would not answer them nor heed their tears ;
Or some gaunt desert-Moloch, whose delight
Was but to feed on human agony,
And drink the dismal music of despair.

' Enough of legends, be they false or true ;
Turn to the real, the present, and the fair.
See this lone valley, with its pillared palms,
Each a tall minaret of waving green,
With shrub and underwood thick intertwined,
Untrimmed and shaggy ; tamarisk and thorn ;
The sacred seyal, clothed with pilgrim rags ;
The pliant ritem, with its hidden flowers ;
A gay, sweet garden, hedged with horrid cliffs.

Peaks of all shapes and heights are here ; some dark,
Like wing of desert-raven, and some bright,
Like knightly helmet with its vizor down,
Flashing afar the sheen of burnished steel
Midway in heaven to the responsive sun.

‘ Here may I sit, in the palm-shaded grove,
So unlike all the wilderness beside,
And dreaming, listen to the nightingale,
Safe from the sandstorm or the blinding heat,
Yet still enjoying in the forest shade
The deep, delicious sunshine, as it quivers
Along these sands or round these grim old cliffs,
Or, hovering gently like a weary bird,
Sinks silently to rest amid the palms.

‘ Here may I sit and think of home again,
My western home, far greener than this grove,
With its soft sward and mountain rills, that know
No dearth nor drought, still flowing in their joy,
Silver and gold and crystal all in one ;
Tho’ without vine or palm or sycamore,
Or olive with its sombre green ; and tho’
Without a nightingale to cheer the dark,
Or chant its gladness to the listening stars.
These heavens are clear, and the swift sun comes up,
With scarce a twilight, like a ball of fire,
Then goeth down with like unshaded blaze.
Yes ; they are clear,—too clear for those whose eyes
Have gazed on the magnificence of cloud
That fills the concave of our northern skies,
The wondrous Oberland above our heads.
Bluer, perhaps, than ours, but shallower far

These desert heavens ; how low, each brilliant night,
Upon the horizon rests the constant star
Of midnight,—star of the unsetting pole !

‘Nor books are here, nor man; yet man and books,
With all that made them dear of love or truth,
I can recall ; the thoughts of other days,
My own or those of others, pass before me,
Recorded in this volume, which I bear
About with me in journeyings, to link
My studious days with those of idleness.

“They say the cypress tree” (so read I here
The thoughts of former hours), “if once ’tis cut,
Puts forth no green again. They say the palm
Grows best when loaded. Be my symbol, then,
The palm and not the cypress. I would prize
The daily discipline that works its way
Into the secret chambers of the soul,
To purify my being and my life.
O solemn fast-days of the Church of God,
When the soul rises above earth, and seeks
A purer sunshine than this world can give,
Let me enjoy you while the world feasts on
In song and laughter, heedless of its sin.

“Four thorns, ’tis said, are needful to make up
A good man’s life, a true man’s character,—
In front, behind, and one on either side.
Which of the wise or great has been without them ?
Pressure and pain and toil consolidate
The feeble will, and root the unrooted soul.”

“Deep sorrow is God’s loving messenger,
Tho’ clothed in sackcloth, with a wreath of thorns

Round his pale brow, and his despatches filled
With evil tidings ; for he loves and loves not :
He knocketh calmly at the gate, and hands
His missive in, but speaketh not a word.
How terrible his silence, would we say !
Oh, would that he would speak, and let us know
From the beginning what his message bears
Of worst or best, without the slow suspense
That tears up life and wastes the weary frame.

“The men of old, the wise in thought and speech,
Who love to knit in one the fair and true,
Tell that the myrtle carried in the hand
Turneth the traveller’s weakness into strength :
I need the myrtle, for my strength is small,—
The tree which giveth life to all who touch.”

“Sound tests the vessel and reveals the flaw.
So does our speech reveal us, as said well
The orator of Athens ; and a greater
Searches the fool with the unwelcome test,
And bids us know him by his empty words.
The idle speech, the idle silence too,
Must both one day be reckoned for by us :
I know not which containeth most of ill.”

“It is the little things of daily life
That test us and that tell us what we are,
Unfolding both to others and ourselves
The deepest secrets of the inner man.
If thou wouldst know thyself, take up and read
The little things of life, and thou shalt find
In them the true expression of the man.
The sap ascends, invisible and silent ;

Light does its miracles without a voice ;
The forest putteth forth its thousand buds
By stealth, and day without a trumpet-note
Supplants the night ; the air leans down
On the subjacent earth, and yet its fields
Feel not the pressure, nor resent the load.
So be our life,—a silent energy,
An unseen potency of useful love.
Be what thou seem'st, and let that ever be
The best and truest ; wrong not by pretence.
Earth's deadliest aconite, I know, is plucked
From out its greenest fields ; beware lest thou,
With a fair-spoken lip of eloquence,
Or quiet sweetness, be the deadly bane.

“ As in the God-appointed sacrifice,
Laid upon Israel's altars long ago,
No honey, sweetest of all earthly sweets,
Was to be mingled ; as the bitter herb
Gave zest to Israel's feast ; so with our life,
The life of strangers ; 'tis the bitter now,
The sweet hereafter ; tribulation here,
And then the exceeding weight of joy for ever.

“ In this low world of shadows and of death,
This earth, I mean, beneath yon silent sun,
Where evil doeth battle with the good,
And fills our air with strife's bewildering gloom,
Sorrow itself becomes our brightest torch,
As if impregnated with light from heaven.—
Torch of the desert, what do I not owe
To thee and to thy calm unearthly light !
Torch of the midnight, bright when all is dark,

Fling out thy radiance on this pilgrim band ;
Illumine these our perilous rough paths,
Until the waste is traversed, and the day
Breaks in its splendour o'er the eternal plains,
Thro' which the living streams in gladness flow."

"I rest, yet rise ; I toil, yet am refreshed ;
I may not tarry till my work is done,
I would go forth to labour while 'tis day,
And then withdraw into myself, like flowers
At sunset, ready for the joyous dawn.
Rather would I be like the fabled bird
That sleeps on wing ; or like the earnest flowers,
Sleepless exhaling fragrance all around !
Be one or many, yet be all thyself ;
True to thy being, give that being out,
And let it tell upon the world around.
As the split sunbeam spreads its sevenfold glow,
So spread out all thyself in happy light
Upon the clouds, which else would all be gloom."

'But I must rise and go ; elsewhere, amid
Fresher and greener beauty, to sit down
And tell you more of what this earth contains ;
For earth is fair, tho' once we know 'twas fairer,
And will be fairer still in days to come.

'I am in Egypt,—that is her high sun,
These her gaunt palms, and this her brimming Nile!
Here, resting by this old imperial stream,
This majesty and pride of waters, where
Antiquity has cast her deepest shadow,—

Where, like a lion from his lair, it looks
Out from each obelisk and pyramid,
I sit and muse, strewing without an aim
Upon the dusky tremor of its wave,
That like a marble pavement spreadeth out,
The light acacia leaves that hang around,
And mark how quietly they pass away,
Without a whirl or eddy, down the sunshine.

‘Egypt, thy watch-towers are the Pyramids,
That battle with the spirit of the waste ;
Thy bulwarks, the immeasurable sands
That stretch on either side ; thy treasure-house
Of wealth, the wondrous river, which, unfed
By tributary waters, year by year
Flushes thy sandy wastes with fruitful soil.
O Rhone and Danube, rivers of high name,
Tiber and Tigris, venerable streams,
Whose banks are histories of kings and realms,
What are ye all beside this mighty flood ?
Like palm beside the sycamore, or like
The cedar in some olive-grove, this stream
Flows, from each river of the earth apart,
Without its fellow of the east or west,
The nurse and mother of old Memphis still.—
Sea of the desert, what a shore is thine !
Cities and palaces and giant fanes ;
Pillar and obelisk and architrave ;
With rock-hewn chambers, whose well-sculptured walls
Tell the great stories of old Mizraim’s youth,
Each in itself a temple or a palace !
Still on thou movest in thy river-march,

Unchanged amid the changes of thy kings,—
Thyself a king more kingly than they all,
Thy dynasty but one from first to last.
Still from the Nubian snows thou comest down,
As each bright summer bids thee overflow,
To do thine ancient work, and sternly urge
Thy annual battle with the sterile sand ;
Still driving back the desert on each side,
And, in thy stately progress to the sea,
Quickening the dead and barren soil to life,
Till the grey desert smiles, and the lean dust
Wakes into waving corn and blushing flowers.

‘ Among the lemon-groves of Jaffa now,
Beneath her autumn palms, whose dropping clusters
Glow in the fiery noon, all bronze and gold,
I wander, drinking in the fragrance deep,
And looking out upon the fitful sea
Of old Philistia gleaming in the west.
Oldest of cities, linked with sacred truth
And classic fable from thy youngest dawn ;
By name *the beautiful*, surpassing fair,
As seen by mariner who steers his course
From the far Occident, where summer’s sun
Goes down in the long reach of green and gold,
Flinging the spent shafts of his dying light
Full on thy face ! Nor less I call thee fair
When wandering ’neath thy shady orange-boughs,
That scent the still noon-air ; or ’neath thy palms,
That wave in beauty to the clear March noon,
And shake their foliage o’er thy spray-swept beach.

Oldest of cities! Sidon of the north,
And Kirjath Arba of the rocky south,
And Egypt's Zoan cannot equal thee.
Andromadè and Perseus, if the lay
Of classic story speak the truth, were here ;
Monarchs of Palestine, and kings of Tyre,
And the brave Maccabee have all been here ;
And Cestius with his Roman plunderers ;
And Saladin and Baldwin, and the host
Of fierce crusaders from the British north,
Once shook their swords above thee, and thy blood
Flowed down like water to thine ancient sea.
First city where the European wave
Of superstitious battle broke in rage
Over those surf-washed rocks that guard thy haven.
Last city whence the dark crusading tide
Ebbd back in broken sullenness and gloom,
Leaving thy bay as placid as before.
City of terror! where the rod of God
Pursued the flying prophet, and with storm
Brought back the unwilling messenger of ill.
City of gladness! where apostles' hands
Wrought miracles of love, and dried up tears,
And with a word unlocked the gate of death.

‘Scenes such as these I would revisit still,
Rebuilding wall and fort and colonnade,
Repeopling all this emptiness and ruin ;
And, mingling with the men of other days,
Would share their thoughts and deeds. But chiefly thee,
Holiest of cities,—now the most defiled,—
Where stood the temple of the Only Wise,

Where the one altar sent its smoke to heaven,
Witness and symbol of the Coming One,
Whose death without the gate hath won the life
For us which only that one death could win.
Thee would I look upon as once thou wast,
When all thy gates were song, thy walls were strength,
And all thy stones were peace ; where melody,
The like of which has not been heard since then,
Rose up from voice and harp and trumpet clear,
Speaking the praises of the mighty King.
Thee would I traverse in that hour of hours,
When He who took my cross went forth in shame
To bear my guilt, and, in most sweet exchange,
To give me all His heavenly innocence,—
My raiment and my beauty and my peace !

‘Am I not there ? Is not that city mine ?
And am I not a unit in that crowd ?
Is not my voice amid that shower of sounds
That fills the Roman hall ? And do I not
Behold the Man ? And do I not go forth
To gaze upon the Altar and the Lamb ?
Beyond the marble wall I see the cross,
And know its meaning ; for that cross is mine ;
Mine is the crown of thorns ; and thro’ my hands
And feet the nails are driven ; it is my side
That the spear pierces,—I have died with Him.
All that is mine He takes, and gives me His.
I get another’s wealth, another’s name :
All that that wealth can give I get, and all
That that name covers is now reckoned mine ;—
His good supplants my ill, His death my death ;

He takes my darkness, gives me all His light.
The imperfect and the perfect thus exchanged,
The bond is cancelled, and the debtor freed.

‘ Back to the burning East (so dreamers speak),
Back to the burning East, whose skies are love,
And stars are splendour, and the sun all flame ;
Where night by night, without a veil to hide
Her beauty, in deep fondness bends o’er earth
The ever-filling, ever-emptying moon.
Yet not for splendour, nor for sparkling heavens ;
Nor for the luxury of golden noons ;
Nor for the mellow moonshine, under which
The cedar sinks to sleep ; nor for the breeze
That cools the olive on the mountain-slope ;
Nor for all these together, would I seek
The mighty East. I know that it is fair !
Majestic slope of royal Lebanon,
Up which the sea-breeze rushes, when the storm
Is marshalling its strength ! Gorges of gloom,
Thro’ whose split crags Leontes flows in power,
As if some giant, with a two-edged sword,
Had lengthwise cleft the mountain-ridge in twain,
From peak to lowest base, and left behind
The flashing weapon quivering in the rock ;
On whose precipitous ledges root themselves
The wild fig or the yellow jessamine,
And thro’ whose crevices the upper snow,
Dissolved by summer’s sun, pours itself down
In lucid rills, or gushes wildly out
In mirthful fountains, to enrich and bless
The gardens and the orchards underneath.

‘Yet not for all this beauty would I seek
The fragrant East, but for more glorious things :
There rose the sun that shall go down no more ;
There sprang the fountain that shall water earth ;
There burst the glory that shall never pale ;
There rose the life with which death strove in vain ;
There was the golden chain prepared and forged
Which knitteth earth to heaven ; there also stood
The more than golden ladder which connects
These lower chambers with the upper halls ;
There was the manger-cradle within which
Eternity was laid ; there stood the cross
Where love and justice met ; there was the tomb
From which came immortality and joy ;
There was the fiery battle fought and won,
Beneath Melchizedec’s old city wall,
Outside the gate, where Death, his two-edged sword
Unsheathing as a conqueror, smote the Life,
And in that smiting lost his victory.
To thee, dear land! first home of heavenly truth,
And ancient fount of that all-healing sunshine
That yet shall fill this light-forsaken earth,—
To thee, dear land, old well of life divine,
And birthplace of eternal liberty,
The heart still turns, and from thy incense-hills
Inhales the odours of a lower heaven.

‘Not always westward has the current flowed ;
Eastward and southward was the progress once,
And many an eastern, many a southern realm
Has drunk the living water from the fount
Whence our great fathers drew their primal stores

Of knowledge and of art. Since then the tide
Has turned, and the old rivers seem to find
A new and vaster watershed, whence still
The ancient centres pour their melting snows
Upon the fields of other continents.

‘ Westward the current has for ages flowed :
The genial East, the ancient home of truth,
Well-watered once, has long been bare and dry.
At last the tide has struck its bounds, and turns
Back to its birthplace on the eastern plains,
Where the old rivers ran, the old cities stood,
The old altars smoked to the one living God,
At Uz or Bethel,—shrines of ancient faith,—
Hebron, or Shiloh, or Moriah’s hill ;
It is already on its way, to make
That faded land once more the Orient,
Rising as rises its own cloudless sun,
Rising as rises its own crownèd palm.
The East revives ; and see, with it come up
Ages of history, once all but lost ;
Stone-carved, and buried in the drifted sand
Of Khorsabad or Philae or Dîbhân.
The East awakes,—rich in its own past wealth,
So long entombed ; rich, too, in the full store
Of western treasure ;—East and West together,
Parent and offspring, gathering their one harvest
To fill the universal earth with joy.

‘ The Orient is not dead, it only sleeps ;
Its sun has not gone down, ’tis only veiled.
It has a future which we dream not of,
A future for itself and for the world :

Its dawn of resurrection is at hand.

The mosque, which like a gravestone covers it,
From farthest Cabul to the rock of Tyre,
Shall be rolled off ; and the great Life shall come
Like a new morning to the land of morn.

“Uncover ye your heads as ye go in
To worship God within His holy house :”
So speaks the younger West, with its new thoughts
Of holiness in wall and arch and roof.

“Uncover ye your feet as ye pass in
To holy places, where a present God
Is worshipped in His glorious majesty :”
So speaks the older East, with its old thoughts
Of holy ground beneath our feet, which man
Must not defile, but tread with footstep clean.

‘ Each has its thoughts of holy majesty ;
Each has its attitude of reverence ;
To each the way is open which leads up
To the eternal throne, where priestly lips
Pronounce the royal pardon in the name
Of everlasting justice to each one,
Of East or West, who names the blessed Name.
Within the souls of both, the mighty truth,
Working, reveals itself in different ways.
“God is a spirit ; they who worship Him
Must worship Him in spirit and in truth.”
And in that day when the unsandalled East
Shall meet the uncovered West, and both in crowds
Ascend the holy hill, all earth shall join
In one unjarring song, the song of men
Who, with their many lips and dialects,

Shall find themselves all one in Him whose cross
Shall be the uplifted banner of the world,
Centre and basis of all holy worship ;
Whose throne in Salem shall become the seat
Of righteous law and happy government
To a delivered world, in which both East
And West shall form one people and one realm.

‘ The same fair moon that lights up Lebanon
Spreads its sweet silver o’er our Grampian heath ;
The dews and suns of every age are one ;
And the same rainbow, bright with ancient love,
Weaves its one wreath for every cloud and clime ;
The sun of May, rich, bright, Italian May,
Melting the snow upon the Splugen steeps
To flood the willow-shaded Valteline,
Calls up a paradise of heaven-sown flowers,—
Miles of blue gentian, Alpine amethysts,
Like drops of molten azure from the sky ;
The primrose and the snowflake by the shore
Of Lemman, when the spring-noon gathers strength,
And frosts are melting from its tangled slopes ;
Night-scenting daphne, making darkness sweet ;
And violets bursting thro’ the mouldering leaves
Of the last autumn’s oaks beside the moss :
These are the broidered girdle of the earth,
That binds all realms together into one,
As if pervaded by a common soul.
The soft March rain of Palestine, that brings
Fertility and warmth in every drop,
Comes down upon her broken terraces
And ruin-cumbered soil ; then everywhere

Bursts up the wind-flower and the cyclamen,
Where the grey sand or rubbish lay before.

‘Thus round the globe moveth the breath of God ;
Thus all the earth receives His daily love,
In sun or shower or odour-bearing breeze ;
And His one family sit down beneath
His silent wing to share His gracious smile.

‘Thus round the globe moveth the light of God,
Rising and setting everywhere,—one sun.
I see it now, as o’er yon mountain curve
It bends its downward sweep, the same fair sun
That rose this morning over other hills ;
It droops and disappears, yet still I see
Its rays flung back from yonder rocky spire,
That like a watch-tower lifts itself on high.
But now it fades ; the twilight comes apace ;
The glow has vanished from the mountain-peak,
And the celestial *abend-kuss* is gone.

‘Thus in earth’s mould is sown the seed of God,
Impregnated with universal life.
Faithful has been this mother-earth to each
Small seed or root entrusted to her bosom ;
And faithfully in her appointed time
Does she refund the treasure lodged within her.
When summer comes apace, the patient earth,
Long silent, as if wholly dumb, takes up
The frozen or forgotten lute, and sings
Its ancient plain-song to the answering woods,
And ocean never mute, or wingèd stream.
So faithfully, to liken great to small,
Shall this true earth refund the immortal seed

Sown in her soil, with sevenfold usury,
In the great resurrection-harvest, when,
At rising of the never-setting sun,
From the dead dust shall spring the glorious life ;
Beauty exchanged for vileness and for shame,
Mortal become immortal, and the furrows
Of the long mute and barren grave at length
Yielding on earth the ripened fruit of heaven ;
The lower discords here dissolved at length
In higher harmonies, and the great song
Of the vast universe then taking in
Its deepest notes, unheard, unknown before ;
The one eternal purpose folding out
To its wide uttermost of joy and love,
And all the compass of its music then
Played out in full, unhindered and unstayed.

‘The lack of sunlight (so thought men of old)
Turns gold to iron ; and the sun, they said,
Pouring its yellow radiance into iron,
Turns it to gold. So think I when I see
The iron of this iron age : it lacks
The sun. And then I gladly think, that when
The fair new sun of the long-promised day
Shall sweetly rise, in its omnipotence
Of transformation, on this waiting world,
All shall be gold again, as at the first ;
And the bright age, renowned in ancient song,
Begin the joy of its unending noon.

‘The bearer of good tidings knocketh boldly,
Demanding instant entrance ; of ill news
The messenger knocks faintly, and with hand

That falters while it knocks. I seem to hear
In these strange days, and in the varied voices
Of men and things around me everywhere,
The loud, the loving, the impatient knock
Of Him who brings good tidings to the world
Of truth and order and deliverance
At hand ; when evil shall have done its worst,
And to some second cross have nailed all
That is or good or true upon the earth.

‘I would not be of those who speak of what
They know not, nor can see with mortal eye,
Eager to plunge into the tangled thicket
Of the great life beyond their little own,
Impatient of the present and the past.
And yet the ripple speaks the rising wind ;
The ruby dimple on the cheek of dawn
Says night is done ; the crash of breaking ice
In the far rivers of the frozen north
Says spring is come, and summer is at hand.
So look I round, and gather up the meaning
Of these surrounding discords. Evil comes,
And yet that evil is the womb of good.
The upas-tree is blossoming, and yet
From its far-scattered seed there shall arise
No second upas. In its place comes up
The tree of life, beneath which men shall sit,
And from whose boughs shall drop the eternal fruit.

‘Creation is in travail, and the birth
Will be divine ; the mother and the child
Like, yet unlike : the child supremely fair,
Sealed with the seal of everlasting youth,—

A world without a wrinkle or a frown,
The dew of morning ever on its brow.

‘ The dynasties of earth are looking out
For the last earthquake, under whose fell stroke
Each shall go down in darkness, making room
For the eternal monarchy that now
Is on its way to take the place of all,
And do for earth what they have failed to do.
Europe succumbs, like to the fabled maid,
Crushed with the armour heaped upon her head.
Its crowns dissolve ; the iron and the clay,
Long knit, now break asunder, beaten down
Like dust beneath the feet, and swept away
Like the light chaff of summer threshing-floor.
The City of the Seven Hills sinks in gloom
Beneath the angel’s millstone, to be found
No more ; her place and name for ever gone.
The oriflamme of Gaul is torn and dim ;
The double eagle droops its broken wing ;
The chaos of the kingdoms now has come ;
Sceptres and spears lie broken on the plains ;
Ashes to ashes, dust to dust, is now
The doom of earthly splendour, east and west.
Mortal magnificence, like mountain snow,
Has melted down before the rising sun.

‘ Not till the race is ended do we know
Who is the winner : time will tell us all.
This only do we know, for Truth hath said it,
The iast shall be the first, the first the last.
The swiftest are the silentest. The slow
Grate heavily upon their ponderous wheels ;

The eagle noiseless cuts the unconscious air ;
And the red bolt is heard but when it smites ;
The arrow-showers of light are shot in silence
By the bright archer as he moves on high.
'Tis not the noise that marks or tests the progress ;
Mute is the speed of men in earnest, brief
The words they speak when shooting to the goal.
The language of the lips is loud and hollow ;
The language of the heart is deep and low.

'Let us move on. The world is growing old,
And suns set quickly now ; in ambush lies
The foe on every side ; we may not tarry.
Day scatters us, but night doth gather all ;
The darkness summons home, and we obey,
Swiftly and silently we hasten forward ;
We must not loiter till to-morrow here ;
Ere stars are set, and the next sun is up,
We must be home within our city-gate.

'But,—softly,—for the way is rough and steep ;
The unshod foot must still avoid the thorn,
And shun the stone o'er which it once has stumbled :
What one false step may do we cannot tell.
Yet, strongly, strongly, tho' you softly press
Along the way ; it will need all your strength.
They know the stream who have been swimming hard
Against its violence : slacken not your strokes,
Lest in a moment the great torrent-rush
Of human custom sweep thee powerless down,
And cast thee cold upon an unknown shore.

'Let us move up. The height will soon be reached
From which the earth becomes invisible,

And only heaven is seen. Both hope and fear,
From which temptations spring, will soon be left
Beneath our feet, and we shall see the banner
That waves upon the everlasting walls,
And beckons us to rise. Below is night,
Above is day ; behind us is the toil,
Before the rest in which the weariness
Of time's slow hours is all submerged at last.
No longer groaneth the astonished air
With human grief ; the height on which we stand
Makes every sound of earth inaudible.

‘When at that height of heights where all is pure
And calm as the eternal atmosphere,
Into which storm has never found its way,
Shall struggling creaturehood at length arrive ?
We grope and grovel here, while overhead
Sit the eternal beauty and high love
Beckoning us upwards, and yet upwards still.

‘To rise on wing, and find our tranquil way
To yon sweet star that rests in joy above us,
Like a snow-covered island far at sea,
How bright the thought, as day by day we climb
The slippery steep, or leap life's awful chasms !
But when,—but when shall that glad flight be made ?
Not to yon sparkling island of the blest,
But to a region more divinely fair,
Where He whom now we see not reigns in light.

‘That light has come into the world ; but men
Have loved the darkness, and that heavenly ray
Has found no home nor resting-place. It has
Passed on from land to land, but stayed not long

In any ; and its rushing course has been
A torch-race of the ages, not yet done.
It has sought children everywhere ; and yet
Men have refused the sonship ! As if all
That such a fatherhood could offer were
But mockery of a nature such as theirs.

‘ I’ve known the night ; when shall I taste the day ?
I’ve sat in silence, with the sobbing gust
My one companion, and the shaken leaf
My gentle comforter, and the tired ripple
With soft sound falling on the moist grey sand,
The type of weary life ; with troubled eye,
Yet heart of hope, watching in patient joy
The long low flicker of the evening star
Across the heaving wave. I’ve seen its setting,
And the sad night come down ; then have I watched
For morn till morning came ; and when it came,
My inmost soul rejoiced, my eye grew bright.

‘ O light of the eternal ages, come,
And with the sunshine of unsetting day
End the long midnight of humanity,
Which thou alone canst end. Fill with thyself
These heavy skies ; pour down thy love upon
The hills and valleys of this ancient earth,
Which waits for thee, that thou and it together
May yet rejoice, thou resting o’er it fondly,
And it as fondly looking up to thee,
The blight, the tempest, and the gloom all gone.

‘ Death is not life’s necessity ; but life
Is the one great necessity of death,
And out of death shall rise, in buoyant power

And beauty incorruptible, no more
To feel the law of weakness and decay.
Yet death is awful in its strength, and yet
More awful in its silence. Everywhere
We find its serpent-trail ; without the sound
Of axes or of hammers, it lays low
All that of life this vital earth contains,
The young, the gay, the strong, the beautiful.
It does not need the battle-field to slay,
Nor the dread blow of the hot lightning-bolt
To separate the temple from its guest,
The body from its co-mate here, the soul.
Death steals into the perfumed room of wealth,
As into the dark cell of poverty.
Como's sweet, sunny lake can quench young life
As surely as the dark sea of the North,
That lays its daily siege to the lone rock
Of the far Hebrides, and breaks in foam
Upon the cliffs of Jura or of Lorn.

‘ There comes a time when night shall not be needed,
But only day,—one long, long, loving day.
O night and coolness after day's fierce glow !
O night and darkness after noon's red blaze !
How I have loved you, counting your soft shade
Sweeter than day ! And shall I part from you
Without a sigh, remembering how oft
Ye comforted and cooled our burning hearts ?
O soother of so many griefs, farewell ! ’

BOOK IX.

THE stars are out upon their pilgrimage,
And the sweet moon looks round in sympathy,
Listening, as, one by one, they sing in joy
Their nightly song in the blue-vaulted hall
Above us, moving on their pilgrim way
To some far shrine that eye hath never seen.

So let me follow them in love and song
To Him who gave them all their happy brightness !
So let me move in constancy like theirs
Thro' all my nightly course, till day shall dawn,
And every orb has hid its stedfast beams
In rising light superior to its own.

A little bluer, and it will be dawn ;
A little fairer, and it will be morn ;
A little brighter, and it will be noon ;
And then the tide of day begins to ebb !—
Is this the story of our common life ?

A little paler, and it will be eve ;
A little shadier, and the twilight falls ;
A little darker, and the night has come ;
And then the blank, broad midnight !—Is this life ?
And is the growth of this immortal being

But the brief story of a summer's day,
Made up of dew and sunlight, and beguiled
With hourly changes, like the varying notes,
Swelling or dying, of some wandering tune,
Which the great wind is playing as it sweeps
Thro' the brown network of the moorland pines :

Life is but fantasy to some ; a mist
Steeped in soft sunshine, vanishing at eve.
To them the ideal is the true, the real
The false. They fashion for themselves a dream,
And call it life ; while that which God has made
For them, they call the commonplace and stale,
Beneath the dignity of royal minds.

Fancy repeats itself, and false life glides
Into some beaten track ; true life alone
Is fresh, and has a pathway for herself ;
Original by being simply true,
And acting itself out in common things.
Debtor to none on earth, she lets the voice
Pent up within her, in its native tones,
Speak out her own true thoughts, that they may do
The life-long work for which each one was given.
She lets the eye see what the Moulder meant
That it should look upon ; she lets the ear
Hear all the music it was meant to hear ;
She lets the seed within her spring and bear,
After its kind, its own peculiar fruit,
Unforced alike in season or in clime,
As the free sunshine and the generous air
May draw out the ripe riches of its root,
And make it all itself, and not another.

Let man be man, and woman, woman still.
Let ocean still be ocean, and the stream
Be still the stream, the breeze be still the breeze.
Let noon be noon, and night the sable fringe
Spangled with silver on the robe of day ;
And these low clouds, that hang above the east
Like scattered plumage of the purple morn,
Still be the clouds for suns to gaze upon
And stars to hide in. Each thing God has made,
Let it be just itself. Let not one life
Steal from its fellow, nor the holy lines,
Dividing form and colour and sweet sounds
One from the other, be erased or dimmed.
'Tis not one general soul that fills the race,
Nor one monotonous voice that speaks in all ;
Each being has its landmarks and its laws,
For beauty and for use ; then let not law
Be mixed with law until all law be lost,
And sea with sky be mingled, hill and plain
Tumbled together, and the rainbow blanched
Into one pale and cold monotony.
He who made law, and all that law brings forth,
Draws His own lines of beauty, form, and order,
And gives each atom of the universe
Its own position, and assigns its work.

Each kind and species, both in soul and body,
Takes after a divine selection, which
Man has no power to thwart ; God, and not man,
Bade this bright globe revolve, and all things on it
Move onward in the path His wisdom chose,—
His will, not theirs, the inexorable law.

The vales are greener than the hills ; the hills
Are greener than the rocks ; the rocks, again,
Are greener than the sea-bleached sands. Yet who
Would fuse them all in one, or choose the greenest,
Casting out all the rest ? Or who would make
Earth one wide lawn, and turn the waving scene
Of rough and smooth, fruitful and barren land,
Into one round of tame, uncheckered verdure ?
Each song-bird has its note ; the joyous lark,
Poised on the breeze of dawn ; the mellow thrush,
Haunting the grove of noon ; the nightingale,
Sweetening the darkness with its loving lay,—
Each sings its own wild song. Each gracious flower,
Fresh from the bosom of its mother earth,
Has its own fragrance and peculiar hue ;
Spring-lilies, pale as dawn ; the feather-grass,
All plumage ; willows shading the sweet brook
They love so well ; the ivy, with its tresses,
Hiding the ruin which it makes so fair ;
All beautiful, yet no one borrowing
Aught from his fellow ; each itself a voice
Speaking a language of its own, and choosing
Its season and its soil, its scent and hue.

So has each human spirit its own life,
Lesser or greater, which it must expand,
As does the bud the blossom, as the root
The tree of its own kindred. Woe to him
Who fondly covets what is not his own,
And lives a borrowed life ; who tries to do
Another's work and speak another's words,
As greater, worthier, loftier than his own !

Nobly does every part of earth and sea
Do its own work, and keep its stedfast course.
Learn here thy lesson, vain, ambitious man !
Do thine own work, and do it well while here ;
Bring out into full stretch thy proper strength,
Misused, it may be, or unused before.
Sweep the whole compass of your God-given lyre,
And let the unstolen music of your being
Come daily out into a jarring world.
So shall you tell upon that world, as you
Were meant to do, and leave some mark behind.

I stood upon the lofty Münster-platz
Of Roman Basel, seat of ancient kings.
Hard by me crouched the venerable crypt
Where Haus-schein and his noble co-mates rest.
Behind me rose the double spire, round which
Six centuries have thrown their solemn shade ;
And where, beneath the high cathedral arch,
In pale red marble old Erasmus sleeps.
Far down beneath me the great Rhine rushed on,
Winding and foaming ; on its sleepless bosom
Barges and bridges, and the busy craft
That bears along the priceless merchandise
Of cities and of nations. There it flows,
As it has flowed since Rome and Cæsar stemmed it,
Doing its own old work unchangeably,
The highway of the nations, and the wall
That fences states and kingdoms, looking round
Upon the thousand cities which it feeds,
The ruined castles which it once defended,
And the ten thousand vineyards which it waters.

There, downward still it sweeps with changeless course
Upon its ancient mission, as it holds
Its fearless way to the far Northern Sea.
Each river has its pilgrimage, on which
It hastes, like one in earnest, staff in hand ;
Nor stops nor swerves till it has reached the goal,
And knocketh at the ocean-gates for entrance
Into the rest which it hath sought so long ;
Some through strange deserts, silent as the night ;
Some trickling down the cliff like silver spray ;
Some stealing cold and turbid from beneath
The sliding glacier ; some through fields of green ;
Some through long avenues of palms ; and some
Through streets of mighty cities, or by towers
Each stone of which old fable has adorned ;
Some by the slopes of the sun-fronting vineyard ;
And some beneath the shadow of the pine.
Thus, woven into song and story, from
Its mountain-cradle to its ocean-tomb,
Each pilgrim-river, chanting its own lay,
Or low or loud, pours onward to the deep.

O music of the living streams of earth,
How sweet ! Each river with its well-known tune,
Unlike and yet so like its fellows, sings,
Not flowers alone, but human hearts to rest.
Sing on, ye streams and streamlets, still sing on,
And cease not, day nor night ; your well-strung chords
Have known no breaking, nor shall know it ; still
Throughout the ages speaking love to man,
Brightening and cheering, as ye pass along,
Ten thousand homes with your bright words of peace !

So mused I silently, as o'er and o'er
I turned the wrinkled pages lying round ;
Now taking up, now laying down again
The well-worn relics of long-buried years
Which rise to life again in every page.
Here folds out one, with small tears spotted o'er,
Youth's first and bitterest,—tears dried up in haste,
As if the weeper were ashamed of each,
Wishing the stains undone. She writes as one
Dreaming o'er girlhood's memories ; o'er love,
That like a gilded barque went down beneath her,
Herself at once the wrecker and the wrecked.
' I was too young to love, and yet I loved ;
He wooed and won me, though he knew it not.
Happy, yet half-ashamed, and insolent,
In the first consciousness of budding beauty,
I would not have it known that I was won.
He thinks of you, a maiden said to me ;
He thinks of me, I said to my own heart ;
And that one glowing dream of being loved
Set my whole life on fire, and wakened up
All womanhood within me, ripening
With passion's sudden heat my unripe girlhood,
Turning me into woman ere I knew.

' I saw none like him among all the many
That came and went, and he saw none like me.
I knew it, and I trembled with delight,
Yet hid alike my passion and my joy.
But eyes will speak when lips are false or dumb ;
For youth interprets silence, drinks in hope,
And without words one heart can meet another.

So eye looked into eye, and still the spell
Remained unbroken ; words refused to flow.

‘We met where streams are meeting, where the Arve,
Strong from its mountain ice-founts, like a spear
Pierces the yielding Rhone ; again we heard
The soothing chimes of moonlit waterfalls ;
Walked the brown moor together ; climbed the cliff,
Which pine and hazel shaded ; took our way
Thro’ the old garden, where the flowers seemed strewn
Like dust of broken rainbows ’neath our feet ;
Or up the mountain gorge, draped all in gold
Of furze and broom ; strolled at low sunrise o’er
The long, grey sandslope, which the sportive wave
Had just receded from ; or at pale eve
Drifted along the lake with idle oar,
Of motion all unconscious ; rather that
Not we, but the great hills were moving on,
Thro’ the slow shadows of the languid twilight,
And the still lake looked as if sailing past us,—
A tremulous stretch of pearl and amethyst,
Wrought into rich mosaic, changing still
Its restless colours as the sun sank low.
Thus summer hours went by ; the link was knit
Between us ere we knew, and all the sunshine
Of these fair months seemed woven unchangeably
Into our inmost being. Yet we parted ;
I might have been his bride, and yet we parted :
I need not tell you how it was, or why ;—
He to forget my fickleness and scorn,
Never to know the tears I shed for him ;
And I to cherish in my heart of hearts,

Till life's last ripple rolls upon the sand,
The recollections of the manly love
Which, in my girlish folly and caprice,
I threw away ; to me for ever lost.
O first and fondest, let me dream again
Of love and thee, as in that summer prime
Of strange new feeling, ere I broke the spell.
Oh, had he but believed my eye, and not
My lip, all had been well ; we had not parted ;
He would have known me truer than I seemed ;
But he was frank, and I was proud and fair.

‘ Then life with me began : self broke in pieces ;
Youth's sparkling dreamery dissolved in vapour,
Like ice-flowers on the window-pane at noon ;
And out of this dissolvèd self arose
A truer being ; out of these gay dreams
Sprang thoughts that went across both sea and earth,
Wide as the world, and widening still apace,
As sorrow upon sorrow struck me down.
For has it not been found that honest smart
Expels the narrow and brings in the wide ?
It is the false that shrivels up the soul,
And feeds the self from which its brooding sprang.

‘ Another flower has faded from my path,
I said in murmur, as the new stroke fell.—
Another folly fled, say rather thou,
A deep voice answered from my deeper soul.
Another blank in this bewildered heart,
Another vacancy in this full earth,
Which lately was to me a lower heaven,
I said in dark and sullen bitterness.

Another idol fallen, the voice replied,
Another altar to the Unknown God
Displaced, and its inscription blotted out :
Room made at length in that o'ercrowded heart
And this o'erpeopled earth for Him whose light
Is dearer than the sun's, for Him whose love
Is richer than the love of lover here.
Another stone in life's once noble arch
Has fallen, and the whole fabric is unbraced,
I cried despondingly. The voice replied,
Another stone is laid here, to complete
The great foundation of the life to come.
My May of life is all December now ;
What should have been my summer, all in glow,
Is winter with its frost. So thought I then ;
But the true oracle spoke, All is well ;
Your summer is not lost, 'tis but deferred ;
Your flowers are coming, sweeter for delay.
Another storm has struck my panting barque,
Rending the last poor sail that I had spread
To bear me onward to the haven ; so spoke
My unbelief. The answer came again ;
Another breeze to bear thee swiftly home :
All storms blow over here ; some simply sink
To rest, while others die in joyous sunshine.
Love on, work on ; thy day of love and work
Amid thy fellows here will soon be done.
At death our doing of the work is o'er,
But the work done remains, endures for ever.
We die, but that which we have done still lives,
Bearing its proper fruit when we are gone ;

Our doings are the blossoms out of which
The fruit for coming ages is to grow.'

I fold another out ; it speaks ambition,
And utters thoughts of restless enterprise.
'Only the blind man asks what beauty is,
And why it is so fondly doated on.
Only the man who has no eye for aught
Like a divine ideal in creation
Would set up for the architect of earth, '
And turn away from such a scene as this
Which spreads before me here. The beautiful
Is not extinct, nor shall be while He lives
Who is the source and fountainhead of beauty.
It liveth on and on for evermore,
Flowing and ebbing, fading, freshening still,
In daily change, like hues upon the cloud
That fronts the setting or the rising sun.
The rustle of yon forest is a song,
The quiver of yon leaf is gracefulness.
The bulk of yon grim mountain-cliff is strength,
The twinkle of yon river is a smile ;
And beauty wanders o'er the gleaming wave,
Or, with the sinking sun, climbs peak by peak
That purple hill, till from its topmost rock
It takes its flight into the ambient gloom.

'What I have seen but makes me long the more
To look and look again on this fair world.
I love to think of earth's unvisited
And unknown scenes of beauty or of terror ;
The scorching splendour of the torrid south,

Or ice-lights of Spitzbergen's murky noon,
Gleaming across her fields of ancient snow,
Unstained by the red war-print. For I doubt not
That there are thousands of these hidden nooks,
In deep Brazilian forest, where the palm
And myrtle intertwine, like strength and beauty ;
Or Cuban meadows, sloping to the sea,
Where the luxuriant wild-flowers strew the plain,
And make a western Paradise, a strange,
Bright realm of fragrance, where all various forms
And hues are seen that eye can revel in ;
Wild virgin landscapes, stretching everywhere
O'er pathless continents, which human vision
Has never yet been gladdened with, true mines
Of silent wealth, untouched, and yet to yield
Their treasures to the gazer, and to fill
Millions of souls with wonder or with love !

‘ Scenes are there of the cliff or strand, to haunt
The dreams of poet, or, more blessed still,
To mould a nation's heart and change the currents
Of its great history, as rocks the stream,
Roughening the water, but imparting force,
And drawing out the hidden life below :
And mazy glens there are, walled in with rocks,
Thro' which the torrent leaps, and, as it leaps,
Calls out a world of echoes ; where above
Perches the lonely pine or shining birch,
And in its hollow nestles the wild rose ;
While right across the abyss of spray and foam
Sails the strong eagle on its way to heaven.

‘ Ye hoary regions of the silent pole,

With your chaste coverlets of virgin snow,
Your boundless fields of everlasting ice,
And peaks that poise the north-star far on high,—
How I should joy, tho' but for one brief day,
To gaze upon your mute magnificence ;
The deep, stern stillness of the frozen air ;
The never-setting sun, that mocks the plains
With its faint warmth ; the ever-floating mists,
That wander ghost-like through the shivering sky ;
The blue, cold shadows hovering everywhere ;
The cliffs that overhang a world of death ;
The roll of the long line of surf, that falls
And rises, as it moans along the strand ;
The melancholy waterfall that pours
From the vast iceberg as it melts at noon,
Unseen and unadmired by human eye,
In chill monotony upon the wave ;
The harsh dull grating of the crystal blocks,
As, one by one, they strike and grind and fall ;
The lonely sea-gulls perched upon the ice
Or rocked upon the swell ; the snowy bear,
Prowling amid the drift to seize its prey ;
The seal and walrus stretched upon the floe ;
The grey fox stealing o'er the ice-bound stones ;
The treeless, shrubless, flowerless wastes of snow,
With only the dark lichen on the crag,
Last spark of nature's unextinguished fire :
All numbness and all death ; no May-day glow,
No frost-dissolving warmth, no living sunshine,
No blossoms bursting to the April breeze,
No dew upon the face of the dead soil,

No streamlet tumbling like a playful child
Between its banks of willow or of moss ;
But tyrannous winter, crushing hill and vale
Beneath its weight of never-yielding snow,
And breathing death into the dull, hard air ;
As if there were two worlds upon this globe,
One green as paradise, the other pale,
Like splintered fragment of the marble moon.

‘Of men and things beyond life’s little range,
Visions and memories and hopes gone by,
Yet vivid still and verdant as of old,
Speaks this fair dawn-break, upon which I gaze
While seated here, and watching while I sit
The iridescence of yon twilight sky,
With its unrisen sun and fading stars,
Each in its order passing out of sight ;
The last, the loveliest, as it vanishes,
Buried in brightness brighter than its own.
See how each trembler sinks into the blue,
Dissolved like snow-flake in the hungry wave ;
Becoming part of the pale golden dome
In which its light like a rich pearl was set,
Ere sunshine, fusing with its magic skill
The gem and its soft setting into one,
Hid in the glow of morn the star of night,
Till eve, with resurrection-power, once more
Shall bring it up in beauty from the tomb.

‘How various in its power to please and cheer
Is that which we call nature ! Yet I find
Ofttimes the change is all within myself,
And not in her. I change, and change again ;

And the same scene seems either dark or bright,
As is the varying mood in which I see it.
It was but yesterday I looked around
Upon a wondrous sweep of scene, spread out
In loveliness of forest, vale, and stream ;
Yet I saw nothing save a blank, bleak outline,
From which had fled all greatness and all soul.
To-day I wander out, and the same scene
Unrolls its marvels, and my soul is tranced.
The landscape is too vast, too rich, for eye
To take in half its splendour and its joy.
It seemed as if some spirit had gone forth
From my own inner man, and overspread
With a glad veil of life and loveliness
A scene which yesterday was dead and cold,
Without a meaning and without a soul,
As if no pulse were beating, and no voice
Were coming up from lips once soft with song.

‘What I have seen of cities far and near,
Ruined or still robust in manhood’s growth,
But makes me long to see what once was seen
Upon this earth, of grandeur or of grace,
In cities that have perished, leaving but
The fragment of a name, round which have sprung
Fables like weeds, or noble legends like
The ivy ever bright, to deck their stones.
Sea-buried Tyre, or sand-swept Nineveh ;
The hundred-gated Thebes, the wasted Troy ;
Carthage, the mighty city of the sea,
Phœnicia’s younger daughter, like her parent,
Renowned alike in commerce and in war,

City and port and empire all in one,
The more than Venice of the ancient earth,
Which in a night went o'er the cataract,
And vanished, flung into Time's oubliette,
Down which all things have disappeared, or shall
Ere long, the best and worst, the great and small,
Kingdoms and kings, the doer and the deed,
The thinker and the thought ; all things except
The few which history in her caprice
Has plucked from dull oblivion ; hopes and fears,
The joys and sorrows of a human heart,
The infant's smile and age's long-drawn sigh,
The broken fortunes and the withered strength
Of families and realms long passed away ;—
Down which have sunk not only man himself,
But his most stable handiworks,—the tower,
The gate, the column, and the obelisk,
The temple and the palace and the hall,
The glory or the shame of ages gone.

‘From the dull morn of yesterday until
To-day, and from to-day until to-morrow,
And from to-morrow till the day that follows,
There are but as three sand-grains on the shore,
Three oscillations of Time's pendulum,
Three atoms of our vast infinity.
And yet in these how much has come and gone
Of sorrow and of joy, of death and life !
How much of the strange infinite of man
Has been begun that ne'er shall have an end !
For nothing ceases, tho' from memory
And eye it vanishes, as lost for ever,

But still prolongs its motion or its being.
All things beget, and in their offspring live,
For evil or for good, still on and on.
Nothing is revocable : all things said
Or done by the obscurest child of earth
Speed on their arrowy way ; and wide and far
Send out thro' time and space their widening waves,
In everlasting undulations round
The universe, for better or for worse.
And sometimes that which has been left unsaid
Or left undone (which ought to have been done
And spoken when the speaking and the doing
Would have borne fruit for ages) makes a blank
Which nothing can replace, and draws on issues
Greater than that which has been said or done.

‘ The infant’s finger, with unconscious touch,
Raises the ripple on the summer-sea
Which the strong man is impotent to smooth.
Millions of arrows shot by human hands
Into the infinite of space and time,
Often without a thought, without an aim,
Must wander onward, in diverging flight,
To tell upon the universe for ever.

‘ Some have the wisdom, others have the gold ;
A few,—their number is but small,—have both.
What is the world the better for it all ?
Some doat on riches, others worship power ;
Some bend the knee to fortune or to fate,
Others look down on life with folded hands ;
Some dream their days out, tangled in the snares
Of potent beauty, hiding heaven from man ;

And others know not what it is to love,
But float along in frozen selfishness,
Like icy fragments when the rivers melt.
Strange world ! Strange dreams ! So soon, so soon
to end !'

Thus writes the friend whose name I do not name,
Who made his earnest way thro' life, and sowed
Seeds as he passed along, and left the earth
Richer, not poorer, for his being here.
And musing o'er his fruitful days, I said,—
Some lives are great in fame, and other some,
Not great, are useful, filling up the space
Allotted them with noble days and deeds.
They move on bravely, and they reach the goal ;
They do not say and unsay, do and undo,
Leaving behind them not one stedfast word,
No high consistency of life-long work ;
They do not wind about upon themselves,
Denying all that once they boldly held ;
Nor move along without advancing, like
The idle skiff that drifts, it knows not whither,
And at the weary day's end finds itself
Returning back to where it left at noon.

Steer for the haven with steady hand and helm ;
Press to the noble end ; work out your work
Till it is done ; slack not your energy
Nor stay your pace because the way is long.
Faint not, but work ; the world is calling loud
For fearless workmen in its day of need.
Shrink not, but work ; the Master needeth thee :
One sickle-stroke will not the harvest reap ;

One blow will not bring down the forest-oak ;
One oar-sweep will not fetch the boat to land.

Truth takes the shape of work ; as seed it goes
Throughout the nations, visible and great.
Truth takes the form of facts, and out of these,
As from eternal seed, it springs, and spreads
Over all climes and ages. Let thy life
Be truth in every part ; so written down
And so translated as that all may read.
Once He was here on earth, who spoke and did
As none have ever done before or since ;
For all His words were works, His works were words,
The words and works of everlasting health.
Poor is that word, by whomsoever spoken,
Or wheresoever, that becometh not
A work ; and poor the work, however great
It seem, that is not in itself a word
Laden with truth that dies not, nor grows old.

Look full into the future : it is thine.
Thy path lies yonder ; thou must tread it all,
And not another for thee ; 'tis thine own.
Let the clear eye show the clear conscience, purged
From guilt's disquietude by that which brings
A righteous peace to the tormented spirit.
Know Him to whom that future all belongs,
And fear not then to gaze into its depths.
The gate is open, and He leads thee in ;
He shows thee what is coming, and He bids
Thee measure well the present by the future,
The narrow *now* by the far-ranging *then*.
He points to ripened evil, ripened good,

And by the ripe fruit bids thee judge the tree.
He takes thee to the loftiest peak, and says,
Look down afar, and see the distant light
Of rising suns, or suns about to rise
Upon the crests of the eternal hills ;
Hear the keen echoes of the far-off joy ;
Inhale the fragrance of the myrrh and balm
Wafted to us upon the wakeful breeze,
That wanders downward, from the paradise
Which lies beyond the sepulchres of earth.

Look full into that future, and take on
Its colours and its odours and its form.
Live in it now, and it will mould thy being ;
Seek to be now what thou shalt be hereafter.
There is a holy city for the holy ;
Live as its citizens, and learn its ways,
Its laws, its customs, its companionships.
There is a home of peace for men of peace ;
Seat thyself under its eternal palms,
By the life-river which is flowing there,
All crystal, clearer than the sunny Nile,
Or shaded Jordan, or the mountain-streams
Whose living silver-gleams make glad the vales
Of the dear northern land which we call home ;
Drink in its melodies, and steep thine eyes
In its pure glory, as it shines afar ;
Taste thou the earnest of its royal wine ;
Put on its raiment of unearthly white,
And learn the love that has its fountain there.
Here sorrow lingers, joy goes by in haste ;
The rainbow vanishes, the cloud remains :

There joy abides, and grief has fled away ;
The cloud is gone, the brightness never dies.

The future moulds the man ; to-morrow's sun
Shines sweetly on to-day ; hope ripens us,—
Like double sunshine, east and west, above,
Behind us, and in front,—before our time.
Our guardian angel thou, unseen, unheard
In thy quick motions round us, sky-born Hope,
Stooping each hour to cheer us and to bless,
In all the invisible gentleness of love,
Which knows no weariness nor stint in giving
To the beloved one its silent joy !

We nerve ourselves for toil by looking onward
Into the splendour wherein all shall end.
Toil tries the spirit, but evokes the man.
In this our day of poverty we live
On the forepayment of our recompense ;
We trade on borrowed wisdom, and the strength
Of those to whom a double portion came.
The vine-twigg clasps the elm ; the ivy makes
The ruined tower its ladder for ascent.
Thus we enjoy another's wealth ; and yet
We make him none the poorer, but more rich,
As having filled a thousand vessels, yet
Himself o'erbrimming still, like the full sun.
Thus we increase our present joy by thoughts
Of the large future, our fair heritage,
To which, with strenuous step, we hasten on.
The Church anticipates her holiday,
And keepeth festival before the time.
She celebrates her final victory

In thickest of the fight, when enemies
Swarm round her, like the furious breakers round
The solitary lighthouse far at sea.

Gaze out into God's future: He has drawn
Aside some little foldings of the veil,
And shown us issues which man dreams not of,
Outlines of mighty thoughts and purposes
Concerning us and this fair earth of ours,—
The haunt of evil now and death, ere long
To be the final seat of life and good.
Study His plan of progress and ascent ;
So shall man's dreams and fables cease to charm.
Filled with Himself and with His glory, see
How it reveals the grandeur of His throne :
Foreshadowing the coming reign of good
Under the holy King, it tells us what
A king should be, and how the thrones of earth
Should represent His kingdom, how its crowns
Should speak of Him to whom they all belong,
And on whose head they shall ere long be set ;
Foretokening the coming reign of truth
Under the Prince of truth, it bids us shun
The falsehoods that are darkening the earth,
And, with the name of light, bewildering eyes
That once were looking for the star of dawn.

Some love the lie, and spend their hollow life
In spreading it because they love it, or
Because they look with evil eye upon
The truth, as that which frowns upon their sin.
Some cheat themselves into the fond belief
Of falsehood, as a thing most beautiful ;

Too beautiful to be untrue ; too bright,
Even tho' delusive, to be flung away.
Some dream vain dreams of what this world may be,
Or what it is ; of what its Maker is
Or what He ought to be as Ruler here,—
A Father, not a Judge, framing no laws
But those of nature, and condemning none,
But leaving each one free to work out all
The ill or good that may be born with him,
And then to vanish out of time and space,
As the cloud passes or the leaf decays,
Unjudged for good or evil done on earth.
Thus the two primal falsehoods still assert
Their ancient sway o'er man, and permeate
The race with the mute poison they distil :
'Ye shall not surely die ;' and 'ye shall be
As God, discerning both the good and ill.'

Light is but one, and truth, like light, is one ;
Both claiming kindred with the upper heaven,
And both asserting for themselves the rights
Of pure and noble blood, the honour due
To a divine and royal ancestry.

Count not the future a forbidden realm
For human footsteps or for mortal eye ;
It is the dwelling-place of love and joy,
Where all things true are gathered, where we shall
Keep the long feast of life's great harvest-home.
We need the future, as we need the past ;
Unless with both, our vessel goes astray,
Or founders in the shifting gales of time.
The foreship and the stern alike require

The anchor in the evil day ; without
The beacon and the fog-bell in the night
Of mist and hurricane, small hope there is
Of weathering the storm. Look out beyond
The screen which unbelief, or sense, or science
May draw before your vision, as if all
That unseen realm, where we so soon shall be,
Were the forbidden region into which
Whoso shall seek to penetrate, tho' God
Himself shall be his guide, is but a fool.
The silent land, men call it. Is it so ?
Is there no sound because we hear it not ?
Is it not full of voices and of song ?
None mute among the dwellers there ; none slow
Nor feeble in their utterance of joy.
All vocal, like the sound of many streams :
There are the harpers, harping with their harps ;
There the full compass of all melody,
From hearts o'erbrimming with divinest peace.
They rest not there ; nor day nor night they rest,
Singing the glorious anthem, ever new ;
And this the key-note of their endless lay
In the bright luminous day,—*Jehovah reigns.*

All light is from the sun. What are the lamps
Or tapers of the earth ? What are the sparks
Or meteors of the air ? The beacon-lights
Of ocean, what are they ? The lanterns dim,
With which men walk the highway or the street,
What can they do beyond the narrow ring
Of yellow light, which for an hour they shed
Upon the timorous and uncertain path

Of him who mourns the absence of the sun,
And longs for dawn as for a port in storm?

It is but taper-light by which we walk
Here on this earth, or at the brightest, but
Cold moonshine ; for the perfect has not come.
Yet it is coming ; what we know not now
We shall hereafter learn, when the thick film
Shall drop from these dull eyes, and we shall know
As we are known. Earth, on its wings of cloud,
Rushes thro' space, and bears us swiftly on
To the long day. When the high noon has come,
We shall no more our lamps or torches need ;
And all the visible shall then be seen,
Farthest and nearest, altho' hidden now
From eyes which cannot pierce the distant dark,
Nor the near mysteries which hem us in.

Man lights no stars : his self-made lamps are poor,
And but reveal the darkness of his night.
Man lights no suns : his noblest science can
Create no splendour such as morning brings
To the fair east, when wood and wave with song
Welcome the dawn. He only who is Light,
In whom no darkness is at all,—He only
Creates and kindles suns ; and who, save He,
Creates for man's dark spirit that which is
Brighter than sun of morn ? The light is His,
And dwells with Him. The truth which is man's sun
Radiates from Him alone ; self-kindled lamps
Are but at best as the bewildering flash
Of sudden lightning, in a moment quenched.
He is Himself Revealer and Revealed.

Who can reveal the Father but the Son ?
Who but the Father can the Son reveal ?
Or who can give us certainty but God ?
The truth which man needs are the things of God ;
Not flowers, nor rocks, nor stars, nor suns, nor all
That dead or living nature speaks to eye
Or ear or heart. The filling of the soul
Must come from Him who filled the universe
With stars and suns. The knowing of His name,
The finding of Himself, and of the way
By which the creaturehood of earth can come
And worship in His presence, from Himself
Must be derived. The voice of God must speak,
Or man must err in blindness and in gloom.
The words of God must from the lips of God
Be written down with an eternal pen,
Or man must strain his eye till it grows dim,
Looking within, without, or near, or far,
In vain. His wisest and his best may search
The dumb obscure, until despair benumbs
The intellect. The unknown remains unknown,
And man still asks his fellow, What is truth ?
Nature is but the echo of His voice,
And not the voice itself ; 'tis but the print
Of His majestic footstep on the sand,
But not His feet ; 'tis but the lower skirt
Of His far-flowing raiment, not Himself.
The broken frame, the hollow cheek, the pale
And weary eye, the trembling limb and gait,
But make us ask, Where is the Perfect One
'Mid all this imperfection here below ?

These heavens are fair; and yet, with all their
beauty,
How little they reveal of His great being ;
How little of His heart, with the strong pulses
Of its deep love ; or of that righteousness
With which He sways the universe ! Still less
Can this dismantled earth, with pain and death,
With wars and terrors, sighs and burning tears,
With graveyards where a thousand hopes and joys
Are buried, make known Him whose name is Love.
God only can reveal Himself ; and sad
Must be the thoughtful man, if such there be,
Who, as the sum of his philosophies,
Proclaims that God has not revealed His name ;
Has remained mute, and left His creature lone,
To grope in thickets which he cannot thread ;
Mocking the outcries of that mighty soul
Which He has given to man, by drawing round
His glory the dull mist which human eye
Can never pierce ; by uttering no voice,
And flashing down no glory and no love,
No truth, no light ; refusing to make known
The infinite, to make the unseen seen ;
To give a sign of life beyond that blue,
Or word of peace ; to show, even from afar,
The gates of a new city and new realm,
To which man might ascend ; as if He grudged
To His own offspring the deep blessedness
Which He Himself enjoys ; as if He sought
In selfish fulness to prohibit man
Even from the vision of His outer heaven.

O silent Deity ! whom human schools
Of thought profess to worship, and of whom
The poet-sceptic of old Rome once sung ;
Seated above on thy cold marble throne,—
If throne thou hast, or soul, or heart, or eye,—
With nothing of thyself or of thy love
To tell to weary, broken-hearted man ;
Hater, not lover of thy children here,
Was it from hands like thine those burning hearts
Of ours came forth ? From icy eyes like thine
Our human tears were drawn ? From lips like thine
Issued the happy words that bind in one
The sons and daughters of our scattered race ?
The gods of Hellas, at their best, all clouds,
The gods of high philosophy, all stone,
And truly named the Silences, are but
Reflections of a cold humanity,
Whose unthawed pulses have long ceased to beat.
The deities of science own no love,
And win no hearts ; in unresponding calm,
If calm it be, shut up, they but arrest
The music of the spheres, dislink the creature
From his Creator, sever heaven from earth,
Pass out of sight and hearing, lest their calm
Should be disturbed by this unresting earth.

I take yon block of marble, newly hewn
From the dead rock ; I shape it into beauty,
The perfect loveliness of female grace.
I kneel and say, O marble, love me, love me !
Does it say yes ? Do these white eyes return
The glance of mine ? And does that chiselled lip

Press mine with fondness? Or that perfect hand
Clasp mine with woman's warmth? No ; all is cold ;
No love, no sympathy, no heart is there.
Hearts are not for the chisel, and dear love
Has nought to do with marble. So thy gods,
Frigid philosophy, where are they all?
Distant, not near, and chill as ice or vapour ;
Gods without love, that can give no response
To the warm pulses of this beating heart,
Which nought can soothe but the responsive throb
Of one great heart still warmer than itself.

BOOK X.

‘FIRST blank in life, first sorrow of my heart’
(So read I in the record that calls up
The days of boyhood as they moved along
In shadow or in light, long passed away) ;
‘First bitter drop in the sweet cup of youth !
My memory goes back to the chill hour,
When he to whom my reverence and love
Had early linked themselves went up from us
To join the heavenly household, ere yet age
Had crushed him with her threescore years and ten ;
All his large learning gathered richly round him,
And his calm faith, that sought the things unseen,
Lifting him upward, as he walked beneath
The shadow of the cross,—bright as bright noon
In all the purity of noble life,
And all the goodness which makes home a heaven,
And all the happy wisdom which leads on
The young and buoyant in their fervent course,
When the ripe words dropped ripely from his lips,
As autumn’s fruit falls from the laden tree.

‘Doubly we knew him ; more than father he,
The teacher and companion of our youth :
Doubly he knew us, and in us he found

How true the proverb of the Eastern sages,
He who instructs a child begets a son.
Doubly we loved him, and with childhood's trust
Leant on his arm, or clasped his willing hand.
Playful and affable, he drew us out,
And led us on in safe and sunny ways.
In him we learned that in simplicity
Of nature is the power to please and mould.
Knowledge is courteous, and the wise are good ;
The truly good are simple and sincere ;
The great are gentle, and the true are tender ;
All kindness is magnetic, and all wisdom ;—
One with the other linked, they send abroad
A common influence to win and bless.

‘Doubly we mourned him ; but the grief moves on,
And loses its quick edge, or but becomes
A gentle shadow flung o’er fiery youth,
A bridle to rein in the wayward speed
Of folly in the headlong race of time.

‘One also well I knew, who passed away
In full maturity of womanhood,
With fourscore autumns sitting gently on her,
And giving out their mingled light and shade,
Like laden fruit-branch of the mellowest hue,
In some old orchard when the sun is low.
Meek with no common meekness, self-denied,
Mindful of all around, she walked in light,
A stranger here, her fellowships above ;
Mother of children who rise up to bless her,
And to tread softly in her steps of peace.
My spirit clung to her, and in the night

Or shaded nook of life still found in her,
When other lights went out or were obscured,
An inextinguishable joy; as yon clear star
Of the deep sky, the star that never sets,
Midnight's lone darling, so was she to me.

‘ And three I knew, caught from our circle here
Ere the long shadows fell on them, or age
Had stolen their strength or made their fragile forms
More fragile : wise and kind and ever true,
Yet hidden, like the silent, shaded pool
Of some sweet streamlet, from the gaze of man.
They stole thro’ life with such a quiet grace,
That no one knew how much had gone from us
Until we missed them, and began to measure
The blank which had been made in home and heart.

‘ Him too can I forget, a second father,
Who, when the hand paternal was unclasped
By death, took up the hands of tender boyhood,
And led us on in goodness and in truth ?
Self-diffident, yet able, above most,
To take a higher place for worth and wisdom ;
Studious, as one who loved to dwell among
The stores of other days and other men,
Yet glad to share his wealth, and to distribute
To all around the knowledge he had stored.
Like and yet unlike each of those around,
Links of a golden chain we were ; and he
Knit us together, and we walked in love,
Leaning and leaned upon, our sympathies
Embracing a long past of ancestry.
Of fathers and of fathers’ fathers, we

Were undivided parts ; for are we not
Made up of bits of all our ancestors ?
In us they meet, and are in us, or more
Or less, all imaged and all reproduced.
I have the memory of a calm, bright day,
One of youth's holidays, long since gone by,
Half-summer and half-autumn. Sky and earth
Were passing beautiful ; and the bland air,
Sweet with the spoil of the red clover-bloom,
And proud of robbery that made it rich,
Yet left none poorer, breathed in softness by.
The face of ocean, by whose side we walked,
Sheeted all over with broad-hammered gold,
Shone in the glow of noon : we loitered on,
Mile after mile, upon the grassy bent
Or yielding sand, chasing the slender wave
As it went back into its parent-sea,
Or with light foot retreating from its flow,
As it returned and swept the sloping strand ;
Sending with oft unskilful hand the shell
Across its level face, and making count
Of each successive bound along the wave.
We strolled, or stood, or lingered ; meanwhile he,
Our teacher, drew us on to hear and learn.
Too short these noons ; too quickly fled these days ;
Only the memory abiding still,—
The scene all changed. The sand, the rock, the cave ;
The small ravine down which the rillet poured ;
The grassy slopes, with sea-pink studded o'er ;
The shell, the shingle, and the bald bluff rock,
Where oft we stood to hook the swarming fry,—

All gone ; swept over by the iron wheels
And iron pathways of this iron age,—
Age of the new, contemptuous of the old ;
Age of the present, thankless of the past ;
That buries out of sight her noblest dead,
Or builds their monuments, or writes their names
Upon the tombstone, that she may forget
The men themselves, and the great words they spoke.

‘ One too I knew, cut down in happy girlhood
(Her woman’s love and sweetness buried with her) ;
All brightness on her brow and in her eye,
And in the waving tresses which flowed down
Like sunshine on her bosom, or flew back
Upon the breeze, as, with elastic step,
She headed her fair compeers in their sport,
Or climbed the cliff, or plucked the July rose.
She sprung, then drooped, for the keen winter smote her ;
The scorpion east wind struck the tender bud
Of the half-wakened spring : the blossom died,
And all its fragrance with it ; all the love
Remained unspoken ; all the promise high
Of life’s ripe fruitage withered in an hour.
’Twas a calm July morning when she left us,
And with sad hands we closed her tearless eyes,—
Truth-speaking eyes of girlhood, o’er whose blue
Guile had not drawn its dimness, and on which
But one deep grief was written, when the light
Of her young soul, the blue-eyed fair-haired boy,
Child of her love and brother of her heart,
Went out and was extinguished as a star,
That rises but to set and disappear.

‘I’ve looked upon the face of coffined childhood :
Would that I ne’er may look on it again !
She who lay shrouded there had been our joy :
How much we loved her, how we wept, when death,
The coward spoiler, stole from us our pearl
And left us but the shell, I need not say.
The tears are dried, long dried, nor do I wish
That they again should flow ; let it suffice
That they flowed once, and would not be restrained.
The wound is cicatrized, the pain is dulled,
And the sharp edge of grief is blunted now,
But can we e’er forget our child of love ?—
Her low voice softer than the plaintive note
Of the Zenaida dove, as it sweeps o’er
The sands of Florida, and melts the heart
Of the rough pirate. Or can I forget
The pleasant love that, like an angel, spoke
From the bright motion of her clear blue eye,
And the quick twinkle of her laughing lip,
Sparkling with childhood’s eagerness of joy ?

‘O stars that never set, whose beams on high
Are a perpetual gladness, shining on
Without eclipse or dimness ; into whose
Far-sweeping orbits, as ye march thro’ space,
Death and its shadow, sickness, come not ; hills
Upon whose peaks only the morning dwells ;
Fields of eternal fragrance ; fountains clear,
That well out immortality and joy ;
Sea of the undefiled, whose waves are light ;
Streams of the sorrowless, whose placid flow
Is health and mildness ; with no icy breeze,

No scourging east-wind, how I long for you !
The voyage has been rough ; the vessel rocks,
And plunges thro' the brine ; the timbers creak ;
The strong masts bend ; o'er us the billows rush ;
Strained is the cordage ; every sail is rent ;
On every side go down the reeling barques :
Yet we move onward, onward, onward still ;
The beacon-light before us, and beyond
Its light, the haven, and beyond the haven,
The land without the tempest and the wave,
The fields without the curse, or sign of death,
The city of the song that never dies.
Here we lie listening, while the organ's skill
Weaves the smooth texture of the pliant air
Into a web of many-coloured song.
But the notes die in discord, and the song
Is ended, or in dirges passes down
To a heartbreaking sadness that awakes
The cry of oft-defeated hope, *How long ?*
When shall the harps of heaven wake up the hymns
In which no exile's wail shall find a place ?
When shall the gathered hosts of the redeemed,
Of every clime and every tongue, begin
The home-bright minstrelsy, in which shall join
The long-hushed voices, which while here, so oft,
Tho' with imperfect skill and faltering lips,
Took up in days of earthly weariness
The words prepared afore for the great host
Of the unnumbered and the undefiled,
Assembled on the everlasting hills ?

‘ O wind, O twilight wind, so pale and calm,

Bring back the voices thou hast borne away,
And pour their love once more into my soul !
I know they never can be what they were :
The soul has fled, the more than fragrant breath
That bore their love to us has died away.
I dig into the tomb, and find but bones ;
The eye is gone, and the delicious light
That flashed out from beneath its eyelids once
Is quenched. I might, perchance, re-light a star,
But the dear starlight of a loving eye
Comes back no more ; for, once, and only once,
Such living gladnesses come up ; they may
Have a fair offspring, but themselves return not
From the deep tomb to which they have gone down.
They print their image and then pass away.
There may be many harps, all sweet in tone,
But the lost lyre of Orpheus sounds no more.
New bards may yet arise, but only one
Sings of the Paradise that once was lost.
There may be dreams and dreamers yet to come,
But the great pilgrim-dreamer dreams no more.
There may be Marathons in future days,
But the great Marathon is past ; the thought
Linked with that battle-field can never be
Linked with another. Nothing repeats itself,
Nor can ; the past can never be the present,
Nor can the future borrow from the past :
Each age does its own work, then passes off,
Leaving the next to do its destined work
For man and for man's earth, for good or ill.'

‘I see them all ;’—thus writes a trembling pen,
Long since laid down, once used so oft and well
To send the word of cheer, the cordial greeting,
The homely news, the mirthful or the grave,
Or deeper thoughts of peace and truth, to hearts
That waited for the welcome messenger ;—
‘I see them all,—a goodly band they form,
The true and trusted ones of earlier days,
Over whose graves we wept no hopeless tears,—
Land safely, one by one, upon that shore
Where the dead live, and where the sleepers wake,
Where the closed eye reopens and relumes,
Purged from this mortal film of earth and sense,
Which hid from it the immortal. I am left
Behind them all upon a broken barque,
Out on a surging sea, whose next high wave
Will fling me on the strand. Yet I am glad ;
They,—they are safe. It was a strong-limbed vessel,
Fitted to breast the billow, and it held
One happy family, our faces turned
All homeward. Suddenly the sky grew sad,
The swift storm smote us, and the big, broad waves
Burst heavily across, sweeping away
One and another and another still.
I stood and gazed. I could not help nor follow ;
I could but watch and see them one by one,—
The infant, with his fair and glossy curls,
Like the blanched sea-weed floating thro’ the foam ;
The fond one passing into womanhood,
With her pale cheek and forehead marble-pure,
Thro’ the cold breakers struggling. How I stretched

My eager hands ; but till my time arrived
I could not follow. I saw each in safety
Land on the seaboard of an endless home.
The partings were like swords within my soul,
But the bright eyes, as each one reached the shore,
And leaped among the flowers, and looking back
To the still struggling vessel, waved the hand
In triumph, beckoning me to follow soon,
Spoke gladness, and dried up the dropping tears.
I was so soon to follow,—they were safe !
No peril more for them ; and the dear day
Of the home-meeting was at hand. I knew it,—
I knew it, and I said Amen, tho' left
Almost alone to fill up what remained
Of life, till I should plunge into the wave
And reach the loved ones landed long before.

‘ Not with the blithe buds of the bursting spring ;
Not with the roses of the sun-loved June ;
Not with the brown of Autumn’s dusky leaves,
Sown broadcast by October’s frosty wind ;—
My chequered life-path has been strangely strewn.
Not by the margin of the burnished stream,
Whose jocund ripples speak perpetual mirth,
And where the velvet verdure springs unbidden
On footpaths of the rush-embroidered brook,
That winds and circles on its sportive way,
Sending up joy into the hazel boughs
That root their freshness in its mossy stones.
But by the sharp edge of the sea-vexed cliff,
Beneath which, on the barren slope, are spread

The broken relics of a hundred storms.
Not thro' Hesperian gardens, or fair groves
Of Syrian olives, has my journey been,
But o'er the moorland, where the shining furze,
Shunned by the bee, waves fruitless; where the breeze
Wounds while it braces,—bids the traveller
Look to his steps and gird his loosened loins.

'Some lives have ever been upon the edge
Of evil, yet have missed it; the keen bolt
Has struck on this side and on that, yet left
Them all untouched; my life has been upon
The margin of the prosperous, yet my feet
Have seldom crossed the line. I have gone round
The sunny lake, yet found no skiff in which
I might embark, to revel in the gleams.

'Yet 'twas not evil that thus threw its shade
Above me; it was good, tho' shaped like evil,
And speaking with its voice: it seemed to me
A cruel stranger, yet I found that I
Had entertained an angel unawares.
The evil came unasked; shall not the good
Come in still larger measure, when the cry
Of the sore spirit has gone up to God?
Does the Creator hate His handiwork,
Or does the Blessed One not love to bless,
And is the Son of God not pitiful?
Are not the worst things that befall us here,
That seem devoid of meaning, or contain
The least of love and beauty, those from which
The heavenly Alchemist extracts the gold
That makes us rich? Are they not those from which

He brings the plastic influence which moulds
And tones our being? Shall we grudge the pain
Of the mysterious process, or recoil
In anger from the blessed hand that blest us?
Break thou these bonds, I said, and I shall soar
Above those bright, bewildering snares of youth.
He took me at my word; he smote my gods,
And for the ease which I had looked for, gave
The thorn and sackcloth of adversity.
The cords were cut, and yet I did not rise;
The ballast was flung out, but all in vain;
I needed more than the mere broken chain.
Earthward my spirit tended, and I needed
The buoyancy of an indwelling power,
To lift me to the heavens; without that strength,
That new elastic energy of soul,
All failure is but shipwreck, in whose shock
The vessel goes to pieces, and her freight
Of all things goodly sinks without a hope,
Dragged down in fragments to the silent gloom
Of ocean's everlasting solitudes,
Without a monument or history.

‘How often in the conflict of the soul,
When deep was calling unto deep, and all
Thy heavy waves were going over me,
Has the rebellious spirit spoken out,
And sought to call in other comforters,
That could administer no healing balm!
O time and change, I said, rub off and blunt
With your subduing touch the edges keen
Of this pervading ache, which still returns

Hour after hour with the fresh bitterness
Of a new sting, as if the poisoned shaft
Were still embedded in the fiery wound.
Yet how shall time do that, if God withhold
His touch divine of comfort and of health ?
Or how shall change assuage the throbbing pain,
If the celestial anodyne have failed ?
Were time (again I said) to soothe me ere
The discipline divine were perfected,
And the ripe end were gained, then should I not
Lose the vast blessing thus in store for me ?

‘Yet would I say, as I have spoken oft,
To Him who knoweth all my ways and wants,—
“Into the blessed sunshine, Father, lead me!
Too long, it seems to me, my life has been
The shade and frost ; my being seems to droop,
Benumbed, beneath too long a weariness.
Lighten this load at last, and swallow up
This lower sorrow in Thy higher joy !”

‘Yet do I know myself ? Or shall I tell
The sculptor where and how to use his chisel ?
Does he not know the marble he has chosen,
And has he not the mould before his eye ?
May not the work be further on than I
In ignorance imagine ? Could I see
What he sees, in the light of his own day,
Might I not wonder and rejoice, as each
Feature and line and shade of my old being
Has vanished, and the new is rising up ?
Far more is wrought in us than now we know ;
And what we know not now, we shall hereafter,

When day has burst and shadows fled away.
Morn comes, and beauty comes to earth each day,
Revealing wonders to the enamoured eye
That gazes from afar ; yet morn creates
Not one new object for the gazer's vision.
It shows but what was lying there before ;
It draws aside the curtain, and, as from
Some mystic fount of molten gold, it pours
Soft splendour over earth, and lighteth up
Its fair pure face, still pale, and moistened o'er
With night's cold tears. Sun of the mighty dawn,
When wilt thou wake, and to our waiting east
Bring thy warm radiance, and reveal the grace
Long latent here beneath the veil of night ?

‘ The waves are many, but the sea is one ;
The rays are many, but the sun is one.
O oneness of this royal universe,
With all thy stars and suns that float upon
The double stream of endless space and time,
But find no ocean into which to pour
Themselves and rest ! Thou oneness manifold,
Speak out to us of Him from whom thou camest,
Whose boundless wisdom filleth all in all,
Unerring, unconfused, unfailing still,
Thro' all the never-straightening labyrinths
Of force and motion and resistless change !

‘ I muse upon the genesis of time,
Written by Him who gave to time its birth,
In the one record out of which we gather
The long and varied story of this earth.
There the beginning pointeth to the end,

And there the end points back to the beginning ;
Strange history midway, like sudden night,
Or like a dread eclipse, that maketh day
The more to be desired. For first and last,
Light irrepressible, tho' shaded oft,
Like a rich clasp of gold has knit the volume
Within which lie the immortal gems of thought,
That never shall grow dim or be dissolved.
Bright the beginning, and as bright the end,
With many a change between of shade and sun.'

' Earth's annals have not yet been written out,
As they shall one day be ; '—so read I here,
In this exploring page, which speaks to me
With the articulate voice of one who had
Read and re-read the story of our world,
Unravelled its perplexities, and tried
To fathom its deceptions.—' In the fight,
The soldier knows not how the battle goes ;
The miner with his feeble lamp sees nought
Beyond the swing of his small pickaxe, nor
Fathoms the veins that lie on every side ;
The lark, however high he soareth, cannot
Measure the ridges of the clover field
In which his nest lies hidden from the eye.

' He only comprehends earth's history
Who knows to take the measure of events,
Or good or ill, by superhuman rule.
He only writes her pregnant annals truly
Who comprehends the great eternal purpose ;
Who has, however dimly, seen the end

Of these sad ages of permitted wrong,
Of this hard conflict between ill and good ;
Who has, but with no human plummet-line,
Sounded the soul's abyss, and understood
How from one drop of that which God calls sin
Has issued forth the universal flood
Of woe and war, of passion and of hate,
Of blood and torture and of broken hearts,
Of lust and pride, ambition and revenge ;
Who has, but with no human light, surveyed
The wanderings of the race amid the gloom
And thickets of this sin-bewildered earth ;
Who, by the light of the one lamp which hangs
Upon the cross of Golgotha, has turned
His own once-erring steps into the way
That leads to the great life beyond this death.

‘ Each story of a soul is great ; but who
Shall write it, for who knows what makes the greatness ?

Or who can sift it, and bring out the grain,
Winnowed and clean from the concealing chaff ?
Who can the dross dissever from the gold ?
Who estimate the little or the great
Even in one human word ? Or who shake out
The folded feelings of a human heart ?
Or who unwind the one hour's ravelled thoughts
Of one poor mind even in its idlest day ?

‘ The balances of man are all untrue ;
His weights and eyes deceitful. He may write
The story of a pebble or a rock,
The annals of a beetle or a worm ;

But the great story of his own vast being,
The hills and valleys of his life, he cannot ;
A life made up of but a few short years,
And yet containing in its troubled round
Tempests and tides and changes, failures, conquests,
In daily flux and reflux without end.

‘ Deep in the facts of time the thoughts of God
Are found embedded, like the golden ore
Within the rocks, or like the flower within
The unsightly seed ; no fact but has a meaning
Worthy of Him who shaped it, or allowed
It to be shapen into what it is,—
The good, the excellence which to Himself
Belongs ; the evil, that which in the creature still
Inheres, by its own law of creaturehood ;
And each event of earthly history,
Each movement of creation’s smallest atoms,
Wraps up or manifests some thought or truth,
Greater or smaller ; none is wholly barren.
He who best reads these is the man of thought ;
He who misreads, or reads them not at all,
Treads under foot alike both pearl and shell.
Round one small fact,—a child’s poor birth of old,
In a mean village,—all earth’s history
Revolves, and shall revolve for evermore,
As round the Pleiad star the universe.
From the low manger-crib, where heaven met earth,
And where the eternal link was knit between them,
Like a betrothment, plighting faith and love,
There has burst forth a radiance that has filled
All space to its extreme, and yet shall fill

All time, each far-illuminating ray
An emanation from that village scene,—
That scene a fragment of earth's history,
So like the rest, that but a few, whose eyes
Could penetrate beneath its homely surface,
Read aught in it beyond a common birth,—
A Hebrew mother, and a Hebrew child.

‘ If God be love, should not this world have been
More beautiful by far than now we see it ?
So the fool reasons ; and the wise are dumb,
Afraid to answer, and ashamed to tell
What sin has done with that which God made good.

‘ Deserts, where are ye ?—There are none on earth,
Nor throughout God's dominions. Man calls that
A desert from which he himself is absent ;
Yet scenes and places which contain the least
Of man may hold in them the most of God ;
For the great fulness filleth all in all.
Man may be far from you, ye solitudes,
When silence sits on every rock and tree,
And the broad sands are dumb ; but God is near.
He fills you like the universal air.
His steps are everywhere ; their speechless sound
Echoes from cliff to cliff. His voice comes down
From the tall peak, and spreads along the wild,
Or wakes the palm to music ; while the moon,
Spell-bound above this wide majestic waste,
Bends over the vast plain, and sings of Him
In whom we live and move and have our being,
The song that without words speaks out His praise ;
The silken sunbeams, winking thro' the leaves

Of the acacia's summer-loving boughs,
Writes on the silent sand-waste, GOD IS LOVE.

‘There are no solitudes in earth or heaven ;
Fulness and speech and sweet society
Are everywhere, except where God is not.
All earth is populous, and the still air
Has its bright companies, whose fellowships
Greet us and gladden us on every side.
There are no solitudes in history ;
Fulness is everywhere throughout the ages,
That make up the slow lifetime of our race ;
No sterile moorlands in these plains or uplands
Of the long centuries that lie behind us.
No lips are dumb throughout the peopled past ;
No voice but has a music of its own ;
No mute unconscious statue which has nought
To say to those who gaze upon its marble.
O history of man, thy wondrous volumes,
Or written now, or to be writ hereafter,
Contain in them immortal truth, or dark
Or bright, as each new phase of being must,
In creatures God has made ; such is the greatness
That cleaveth to the weakest and the worst
Atom of creaturehood. Each thing below
Is eloquent : not sun, nor moon, nor star
Alone in their majestic brightness ; nor
Seas, rivers, forests in their loveliness ;
But each small fragment of a human life,
The life of childhood or of poverty,
Too mean for man to notice or record,
Speaks with as true an utterance, and contains

A deeper wisdom and a loftier power.
No commonness nor littleness belongs
To aught that claims an everlasting future,—
Endless capacity for grief or joy,
Relationship to the Eternal All.

‘ Hills of the royal earth, that stretch to heaven
Like ruins of a yet more royal world,
Once fair, but now o’erthrown and desolate,
Whose giant relics cover this green round ;—
Or first-growths of a wondrous world to come,
When the dark deluge of unfathomed evil
Shall be rolled off the surface of our globe,
And the long-hidden grandeurs reappear,
Fairer and nobler far than eye hath seen!
Hills of the sacred earth, designed by Him
Who drew it from the void and called it good,
To be the dwelling-place of holy men ;
Mysterious peaks, muffled in silver mist,
Or sheathed in golden sunshine ; robed in snow
As with a priestly stole, or wreathed with green,
Each with his own star-broidered diadem
Set on his forehead by no earthly hand ;—
Wild ridges of the Syrian Libanus ;
Helvetian Jungfrau ; Ida of old Troy,
That gazes on the gleaming Hellespont,
Mother of fountains and heroic streams ;
Or tall Olympus, at whose verdant feet
Sweet Tempe slumbers in her loveliness,
Reputed haunt of fabled deities ;
Asian Hemodus, looking down afar,
As from a thousand watch-towers, on the plains

Of India, with all their princely state ;—
Each, to his summit, every inch a king.

‘ And yet with all your greatness, cliffs of earth,
Mountains of west or east, that lonely hut
That roots itself upon your lowest slope,
And which your pines or boulders almost bury,
Contains a nobler piece of heavenly skill,
A truer revelation of the godlike,
Than can be seen in you. That human life,
Or fragment of it, that is lived beneath
Yon lowly roof, has in it more of grandeur,
Wraps up within it more of lofty truth,
In one hour of its common history,
Than many thousand peaks of noblest Alp
Or Apennine, on which we gaze and gaze,
As on the vastest of the works of God.’

‘ You know my life, a plain and common one ’
(Writes the old college friend who crossed the threshold
Of learning’s ancient porch along with me) ;
‘ No matter of romance, for tale or song,
Does it contain ; a placid journey mine,
With but a shade or two reminding me
That night is on its way to me, and that
Beyond the night is day. I cannot tell
Of wrecking tempests and of sinking barques,
Of the swollen river to be crossed when darkness,
With all its added fears, came down on us,
Making the bravest shrink. My feet have trod
A smoother path than most ; and as I look
Back on its pleasant windings, day by day,

I wonder how I should have stolen along
So tranquilly, as if between the storms
Which on the right and left went roaring by.

‘Sweet silver childhood, like a May-day song,
Gave out its melody and died in joy,
Yet left behind it life-long chimes of love,
To soothe and sweeten all my after years,
And with their echoes to reverberate
Thro’ every chamber of my listening soul,
Till the last shadow falls upon the brow,
And memory succumbs to palsied age.
Immortal dreams of childhood! How I love
To wander back with still elastic step
Amid the fragrance of your morning flowers,
To breathe again your soft delicious air,
To mark the present mingling with the past,
Like gold on which a star is shining, or
Like the sea’s myriad drops, exhaled on high,
Returning to their fountains on the hills.

‘Yet in these dreams the land beyond the dream
Dimly revealed itself. I caught the outline,
Tho’ but in glimpses, of its loveliness,
And took possession in my childish heart
Of the eternal heritage, as if
I were already there. I heard the voice
Which spoke on earth as never man had done,
All wisdom and all tenderness; I said,
Did He not mean *me* when He spoke the words
Of grace and welcome from His human lips?
Or would He in His large and lowly love
Repel me, when I took His hand and asked

That He should lead me thro' the mists of earth
To His own city, where the holy dwell?

' Boyhood came up, and with it also came
New eyes and ears, to look and hear and know,—
More serious eyes and ears, tho' not less glad.
The soul was growing, and the thoughts went out
With graver earnestness to things beyond
The fairy landscape of our younger days.
The airy views of childhood now dissolved
In visions wider, fuller than the child
Had dreamed of in his most fantastic moods.
Life's low horizon raised its curve, and grew
Larger and more capacious, falling back,
And leaving in the foreground ampler space
For action, and for fancy, and for joy.
The daisies vanished, and the roses came ;
The blossom fell, and the rich fruit began
To peer out from the crevices in which
It had been hidden by the tinted bloom.
My feet sought loftier scope ; my steps disdained
The common level of the garden walk,
Which up till then had been my more than Tempe.
They climbed the cliff ; they swept along the moor.
The bee and butterfly were now forgot ;
The lark bewitched me with his dewy wing,
And voice that sung of sunrise and of heaven,
As, like a wingèd gem, he hung above
His low nest curtained round with clover bloom,
Where all night long he dreamed of dew and flowers.
The sea-bird swung across the whitened deep,
Or dived for prey beneath its populous wave,

Nor envied the white plumage of the breaker,
Rejoicing in the purer snow that tipped
Her silver crest, or sheathed her shining neck.
The bounding spaniel breasted the red stream ;
The mountain goats toiled up their slippery way
To the sharp summit of the naked peak,
Wondering that I should follow to a crag
Which only they and the strong eagle knew.
Wild cliffs of childhood, what a joy of spirit
Were ye, in your old grandeur, when we stood
On your bold height to mark the rounded earth,
Or watch the sparkle of the distant sail,
Or take the measure of the ample sea,
Longing to plunge in the majestic clouds
That hung upon its frontier ! Here we sat,
And sung our jubilate to the winds,
Our hymn of morning as the morning rose,
And claimed for God the first song of the day,
While far beneath us slept the sea of dawn :
Or, leaning o'er the rock when woke the storm,
We watched with ear and eye the ascending surge,
Breaking beneath, in thunder 'gainst the wall
Of the wave-chiselled precipice, and smiting
With fruitless vehemence the jutting rounds
Or sharp-receding hollows of the cliff,
Which gave back every stroke, and sent aloft
Their swelling tumult, like the echoing blows
Upon the boss of Odin's shield, or sound
That filled fair Goldau, when adown its slopes,
With its huge avalanche of woods and rocks,
The Rossberg rushed into the fields below :

Or, in the purple summer evening, lay
Watching the universal lamp of earth
Go down in the far plain of the flushed sea,
Where sky, and cloud, and wave were locked within
Each other, as if woven into one ;
Spreading its changeful radiance under it
Like miles of beaten gold, or like the sparks
From the half-molten iron on the anvil,
When the high hammer-stroke comes heaving down.

‘The moorland, too, in its waste loneliness,
That gem of untilled nature, relic rare
Of the uncivilised, untutored earth,
Level, or heaving with a thousand swells,
Was ever fair to me, and wonderful.
It won my heart, and with its varied vastness
Drew my free footsteps mile on mile to roam,
’Mid its bewitching pathlessness of heath,
O’er which the spotted moorfowl hurries on,
And where the ladybird and dragon-fly
In many-coloured beauty ply their wings,
Not without music of their own, to break
The drowsy whisper of the wilderness ;
When shade and light, in their still ebb and flow,
Softening or brightening the motley hues
Of straggling shrub or ever-verdant moss,
Or wild-flowers by the edge of rushy pool,
Moved over all and made perpetual change.

‘Dear willows of the brook, old summer friends,
Dropping your tresses o’er the welcome wave,
And stretching over it your ancient boughs !
How often have I sat beneath your shade,

To rest, and dream, and hear the pleasant song,
At noon, of eddy or low waterfall!

‘I know, too,—for I’ve seen and shared it all,—
The keen unshaded fervour of high noon
Upon that ruddy plain, or level flush
Of more than earthly glow, when the low sun
Sinks o’er that stretch of moorland, when the heath
Is all in harvest-blossom, sky and earth
Mingling their purple; all the Occident
Festooned with sunshine, hung upon the wreaths
Of many-folded clouds. There, too, I’ve seen
Night’s placid grandeur, when the rounded moon,
Like a cold statue newly sculptured, rises
In virgin beauty on the dusky waste;
Or when the starlight with its diamond rain,
As with a spell, revives the weary flowers.
I’ve seen the night departing;—swiftly, softly,
It shakes its sable pinions and is gone!
The red dawn breaks like an inflowing tide,
And fills with luminous ripples all the space
Between these island-orbs that float above,
Till, in the advancing waters of a light
Far brighter than their own, their beams are buried.

‘A storm is on the moor! The boy is there,
Delighting in the tumult of the scene.
It is the tempest’s chosen battle-field;
Not even the ocean wilder or more gloomy.
The heath is surging into ruddy waves,
Swayed to and fro by the remorseless gale,
Yet un-uprooted even by the strokes
That snap the birch or tear up the tall fir.

The gorse, too slender to resist or break,
Bending and rising with its feathery bloom,
Waves its rich gold, like banners of a host
Gaily equipped and marching to the war.
The wild knoll grows still wilder, as if rocked
Down to its base by the all-scourging wind,
And shadowed by the dark clouds overhead,
Which rain their fury on the passive plain,
And scoop sharp runnels upon every slope.
It waits till the fierce foe has spent his rage,
And, with no wreck upon its unscarred face,
No relic of the gale save freshened beauty,
Shines out again as if no storm had swept it.

‘ Boyhood soon dreamed itself away ; too soon !
I wished it, yet I wished it not, to go.
Go, said I, go, but come again ; and when
Thou goest, take not all thy sunshine with thee ;
I cannot part with thy fair morning glow.
Take not thy music with thee when thou bidst
Farewell, but pass it on to manhood, and
Let youth and manhood clasp each other’s hands,
And move along abreast. It might not be :
I could not have both noon and morn in one ;
For life divides itself, and rivers deep
Sunder its rugged continents. Stern days
And sterner studies came ; still life was fair.
There was a joy in everything, and peace,
Like a perpetual lamp, not of this earth,
Shone in my heart, and lighted up my steps.
The clouds that oft hung heavily around,
And gathered up within their bulky folds

The storms that break the calm of human hearts,
And wreck the goodliest and most full of hope,
Went past me, leaving not one broken flower.

‘By the deep well of knowledge, softly fringed
With the green moss of ages, I sat down ;
I looked into its depths, and stooped and drank ;
All love, divine and human, seemed within
My reach. Each draught refreshed me, and I drank
Again, and still again. I could not stay,
For in the cup with which I drew the treasure
From the clear fount, seemed magic, and the water,
With which it sparkled, quickened every part
Of my awakening spirit ; and I felt,
With each new draught, new vigour and new life
Perfusing me, and lifting up my soul.
To know seemed only worth the living for,
And not to know was like a living death.

‘All life seemed changing ; my whole being woke,
And looked round on a world which hitherto
Had seemed what it was not, or had not seemed
What it in essence was. All faces changed,
All sounds and scenes ; the change within myself
Altered each thing without me, giving depth
Of meaning to the meaningless ; with music
Filling up that which seemed unmusical ;
Transforming into venerable softness
Words which, when uttered first, perchance seemed
rude ;
Making even silence eloquent ; the sweet
Still sweetening ; the waves of stormy life
Smoothing into a bright and solemn calm.

‘ Thus passed the day of discipline and growth :
Leaf, bud, and blossom came and disappeared ;
The bubbling fountain welled, and rose, and sunk.
I learned from failure. My successful plans
Were built on ruins, or it might be ashes,—
My own or others ; daily teaching came,
And daily did I welcome it. I knew
Blind error sometimes hath a seeing son ;
The rough, dark seed brings forth the fruitful tree ;
And the best things are the most deeply hid,
Like pearls beneath the breaker’s restless foam.

‘ Let me, my friend, then, ere I close this page,
And bid thee, as in duty bound, good-night,
Write down for thee some parting thoughts, which I
Have gathered in my pilgrimage, and which
Perchance may teach thee something that will last.

‘ Live well, for thou shalt not live long ; not broad,
Tho’ deep, is life’s inevitable stream.
Gather up wisdom as you gather gold :
Buy it, but sell it not ; seek till you find.
Yet hoard not, like the miser ; freely give,
And in your giving double all your store.
The wise learn slowly ; at a single bound,
Fools, clearing every fence, move o’er the field,
And at the end are just as at the first.
Thrust in your sickle everywhere ; glean well,
And glean in every field. Count none too poor
Or too unlikely for your toil. They say
Children and fools are prophets, and that God
Supplies from His own wisdom what in them
Is lacking of the full and mellow culture ;

Even as He feeds the ravens, and instructs
The wren to build a nest which man in vain
May try to imitate. It may be so ;
I know not ; but I know that from each thing
That lives or moves or is, even man may learn
Much of high wisdom, which if he despise,
He shall be poorer ; something which he can
Get nowhere else than from the slighted lip
Of fool or child. Yet waste no strength on trifles ;
The lion hunts not ants, nor eagles flies.
Aim high, tho' not in pride, nor to o'ertop
Your fellows here ; the higher that you soar,
Be thou the lowlier, for as you rise and rise,
The purer is the air, the wider is
The horizon, and the clouds are all beneath.
Make haste ; the loiterer loses many a scene,
Which all the flowers he gathers cannot equal.
Life is half-spent before we know its worth.
Be calm, tho' earnest ; hold the bridle firm
Of fancy and of passion ; do not say
That only little souls and hearts are still.
Great is the sea, yet with its mighty waves
It can sink down to gentleness and love.
All violence of speech or deed is evil ;
'Tis weakness and not strength to them who use it.
Dispute but sparingly ; the warmth of words
Warps judgment, blunts the conscience, leads aside
Into one-eyed, one-sided bitterness.
In over-eagerness the archer oft
Misses the mark, and wounds both peace and love.
In much debating, truth itself is lost,

And work is left undone. The seamen quarrel,
And the ship drifts upon an iron shore :
The shepherds fight, and straightway comes the wolf
To snatch an easy prey from folds unwatched.

“Error is breadth,”—so runs the creed of
progress ;

Error is straitness, and must ever be,
If God Himself, the Infinite, be TRUTH.
No error, bold soever let it be,
Ever enlarged or purified the soul.
Shun most the impure poet, who defiles
His God-given power of song, and vomits forth
His filth upon mankind, and leaves the world
Uncleaner than he found it. Rather far
Would I, like Egypt’s ancient sons, bow down
To leek, or crocodile, or sacred bull,
Or ibis of the plain, lone perched amid
The shallows of the melancholy Nile,
Than give my homage to the human brute
That fills his song with oaths and lust and wine.
From the pure air distils the heavy dew ;
From the bright petals of the brightest flowers
The poison comes ; so from the book of truth
The error that destroys is sucked by man.
In strife, if strife must be, he suffers least
Who bridles well his lips, or steeps his pen
In charity. It is the loving who are strong.
The great are always pitiful ; the true
Are tender-hearted, easy to be won.
The blessed of the Blessed One is not
The conqueror ; no,—but the peacemaker, he

Who knows that sword-wounds may be healed, but
hardly

Those of the tongue, the poison is so deadly.

‘It is for peace that arms are forged, not war ;
And one sword keeps the other in its sheath.

Unstring the bow, shiver the spear in pieces,—

Will human passion die, or pride give way ?

Will the lie perish, and the truth be king ?

Will lust of power, or gain, or glory cease

When armies are disbanded, when the flag

That waved its colours over them is rent,

And the war-trumpet sounds the charge no more,

And the war-steed goes home to plough the soil ?

Man’s heart is the great arsenal of war ;

New-mould it, purge it, and then all is peace ;

Till then in vain you blame the sword and shield.

The strong are few, the feeble everywhere ;

The passive power of weakness rules the world,

By numbers bridling and controlling strength ;

And weakness is not wisdom, tho’ it oft

Has counterchecked what wisdom would have done.

‘Heaven’s ever-moving universal lamp

Will do for all, man’s torch for barely one.

One word divine is light for evermore ;

The many words of man go out in darkness,

Like sparks of molten iron on the anvil,

Or firefly’s gleam, which, though it twinkle bright,

Is yet no sun to light the traveller.

The arrow shot, the stone flung from the sling,

Return not ; so the sentence from the lips,

Once sent, can never be recalled ; ’tis gone,

To wander onward thro' eternity.
Thy secret is thy prisoner, says the proverb ;
But let it go, tho' but a foot beyond thee,
And straightway thou art prisoner to it.
He who has enemies must not go to sleep ;
And foes are round us in this world of sin,—
One foe above the rest, who sleepeth not ;
Watch on thy knees against that foe of foes.
Often behind the cross that evil one
Lurketh, all unsuspected and unseen,
And from beneath its shade throws out his snares,
Or shoots the deadliest of his deadly darts.
Put on the armour and defy the foe ;
For armour better than Pelides wore
Lies at thy side,—the armour forged in heaven.
Then, tempter, ply thy darts ; they pierce me not !

‘ Be stable ; play no double game, or with
Thyself or others ; trifle not with truth,
Or honesty, or conscience. Ah ! how soon
Do we forget what we have been and done,
And, as convenience asks, reverse ourselves
Like the ignoble wind, forsworn, untrusted.
The lie, tho' fair in promise, wrongs the soul,
And truth, tho' stern, will do thee good at last.

‘ Anchor thy soul on truth ; it shall be well
With thee whatever tempests may arise.
If skies are ominous, and night is long,
And clouds are mustering where the dawn should
spring,
Fold round thee closer the celestial mantle,
In which the men of other days went forth

Upon their journey ; for the road is one,
The dangers still the same, both thine and theirs.

‘ A time will come when bitter shall seem sweet,
And sweet seem bitter, good and ill alike ;
When palm and upas, growing side by side,
Shall seem the same, and men shall feed on both,
Pitching their tents beneath their common shadow ;
When sea and earth shall mingle, and when each
Shall vanish in the other ; when, amid
The abrasion of old truths and creeds, no man
Shall find the landmarks of the certain, but
Amid a restless chaos wander on,
Without a compass and without a star.
May I and mine, before that day of evil,
Be safely anchored where the light is light,
And day is day for ever, without night ;
Where sweet is sweet, and all the bitter gone ! ’

BOOK XI.

‘FAIR earth! with thy calm sun and calmer moon,
Thy thoughtful stars, like loving sentinels
That pace their rounds about thee day and night,
With never-slackening faithfulness and care
Keeping their glorious watch, and guarding thee
’Gainst the rude darkness rolling in and in
From regions out of sight! I call thee good,
As He once callèd thee who made thee so,
And made thee for Himself.

‘All-nurturing earth!

With thy soft couch and coverlet of green,
Thy curtains of the never-fading azure,
Which have for ages rested, still the same
In colour and in compass, on the wide
And waving circle of a thousand plains!
Round thy rose-braided waist, the constant sun
Flingeth each morn his lover’s arm of light,
Softer than down, and sings to thee the songs
Thou lovest best from his own radiant lips.

‘Far-seeing earth! that lookest forth on space,
Which, like an unclaimed common, sweepeth out
Into the dim and sad invisible,
Beyond the darkness and beyond the light,—

Space, of which no man knows the awful range,
The depth profound, or height above all scale,
Haunt of old fable, home of mythic dreams !
Thine eye is on each orb that lies becalmed
In the dim offing of the universe,
Like white barque coming into sight, each one
Freighted with sunbeams from some port of light ;
Thyself unseen, unnamed, unknown by them,
In thy lone distance, as an atom here,
From whose small compass millions of keen eyes
Look up and wonder at the upper glory
In the star-studded azure round and round :
Thy garment the glad air, with ductile folds
Fitting thee close, yet shaken by the breeze,
Or vibrating with angry thunder, which
Imparts its tremor to the startled wave,
And wakes it from its silence and its sleep :
Thy veil the dreaming clouds, behind whose folds
Thou hidest thy fair brow from moon and sun ;
Or playful mists that wander to and fro,
Chasing each other over hill and vale :
Thy cincture the interminable main,
That untamed thing of beauty and of dread,
Sparkling with everlasting amethyst,
Clasped by sunrising and sunseting gold,
And on whose never-ending wilderness
Of wave and foam the mimic stars each night
Perform with silver feet their sparkling dance :
Thy pliant streams, with their pellucid chains
Knitting the sundered realms and tribes of earth,
Binding in one her scattered provinces,

Making one realm of many, riveting
Ocean and earth together, flinging out
Their silver network, never soiled by age,
Veining the hill-slopes with their living streaks,
And clasping cities with their sunny zones :
Thy rich embroidery of wood and cliff,
Of lake and vale, of mountain and fresh field,
With songs of wind that sweeps the unseen chords
Of thy Æolian harp, now loud, now low,
In storm or calm, with fragrance carried up
From twice ten thousand blossoms, all awake,
Soothing and sweetening the unsoiled air,
In the pale twilight or luxurious noon.

‘ Gay orb ! that smilest like an emerald
Within the sapphire casket of these skies,
That fold thee fondly in their pure embrace ;
Thy depths unsearchable, but filled with all
The locked-up secrets of His love and power
Whose thoughts are everlasting purposes,
Whose purposes are everlasting thoughts ;
Stored with His truth and wisdom everywhere,—
In mystic cells beneath, in heights above,
Of cloud and mountain, sea, and stream, and wood,
Each with His thoughts impregnated, and with
His beauty bright, in feature and in form.

‘ Benignant earth ! bearing upon thy breast,
Like nurse or mother, thy vast progeny
Of sons or daughters ; still sustaining all,
Feeding and fondling each, replenishing
In thy impartial bounty all alike,
The lovely or unlovely, great or small.

‘Glad earth! thy golden day filled up each hour
With all the sweetness of far-travelled sunshine,
Arriving on thy shore from stranger-lands
The messenger of heavenly peace and love;
Thy nights star-lighted, or shot thro’ with meteors,—
Brightest when all thy dark is at its darkest,
Like planet-lightning from another orb,
Or gleam of angel’s lantern flashing thro’
The astonished midnight, as its bearer passes
On gracious errand to the sons of men.

‘Dear ocean, too,—how shall I speak of thee?
Ebb thou and flow, and frown and smile and heave;
Still be, as thou hast ever been to me,
My friend of friends in sympathy of soul,
The partner of my joys and hopes and griefs!
Thy voice is melody, thy breath is balm;
Thy face, as the broad sun lights up its lines
At noon or even, a wilderness of gold;
Thy touch is magic to these throbbing veins;
Thy ripple-song is music to this ear,
Like an old air perpetually new,
All love and life in each familiar note
Which the free breeze draws from thy well-tuned
strings.

All that I know of beauty and of song
Is in my vision ever knit with thee!
In the capricious strains that from thy harp,
Wind-swept, come forth, so varied and so full,
I hear the compass of all harmony,
The terror and the tenderness of sound;
The winds above thee swelling the high chord,

And thou the lower octave here below.
Free as the gales that ride upon thy furrows,
Or rest upon thy foam ; yet made for man,
Not man for thee ; the common of the nations,
Which not even she, who says she rules the waves,
Can call her own, or venture to enclose.

‘ Great ocean ! never stale, nor tame, nor poor ;
Yet still the same in voice, and hue, and vastness,
As when yon azure awning first hung o’er thee !
Thy rocks grow grey, but still thy wave is green,
And ever young, as when the first sun rose
Upon thy face and drew forth all its smiles ;
Thy Occidental wave as full, as when
Long since it rolled before the imperious gale,
And carved old Scotland’s rockwork of the west
Into a thousand bays and caves and isles,—
The home of mist, of shadow, and of foam ;
Thy breakers still as strong as when they struck
The splitting cliffs of Thracian Chersonese,
And breached the Dardanelles, or open flung
The gates of Calpe, to let in the storms
Of the far west upon the inland lake
That knits three continents, and drops its freshness
Upon the verdure of a hundred isles.

‘ Companion of my sweetest solitude,
I lock my arm in thine, and roam along
Thy margin, still conversing with thy waves !
I dream of thee ; my thoughts, like happy clouds,
Float o’er thy wind-worn plains ; I fondle thee,
As does the child its mother, and my eye,
From farthest deserts, ever turns to thee !

How soft thy rising ripple's cheerful whisper,
And thy light wave's low wail along the shore,
When the ripe restless corn-field, doubly yellow
With the low radiance of the dropping day,
Fringes thy green with gold! O listening night!
With eyes and ears all open, hour by hour,
What dost thou hear and see, when leaning o'er
The solemn surge that gazes up to thee,
And into thy profoundest darkness sings,
As into the bright depths of burning day,
Its ever new and ever ancient song?
The melody of waves ascends to thee;
From thee there cometh down, like falling dew,
The sparkle of a beauty never stale,—
Some planet-smile, or glow of triple star,
Sweeter than all the rest that shine above,
On the expanse of the meek-fronted heaven.
What gems are thine, on bosom and on brow!
Around thy neck heaven's happy daisy-chain,
The Milky Way, that clasps thy stainless blue;
Around thy waist pearl upon pearl is sparkling;
And on thy rounded skirts what diamonds hang,
Which ages only burnish, and which motion,
Swift as the lightning-shaft, displaces not
From the deep settings of their heavenly fixture!'

Thus wrote in musing mood, with easy pen,
On this old scroll, the poet-friend of youth,
The studious dreamer, who now dreams no more;
For they that are the dearest take the lead,
And pass on swiftest to the resting-place,—
Bemoan them as we may,—like shipwrecked men,

Brought all the sooner to the quiet shore.
For dreams exhaust the soul which they inspire ;
Love wears existence down, and these fresh lives
Are exhalations which the noon drinks in.
I visit oft his tomb, and smooth the turf
That swells above him. 'Tis a gentle spot,
Where he, and not a few like him, revered,
Rest, after earth's brief weariness. I look
Around me, and I see them all again,—
I see and see not, for they are not here ;
I find nought but the ashes or the dross
Of life's exhausted mines, the crumbled walls
Of Time's dismantled forts. I multiply
Figure on figure to depict the scene
Of loneliness and ruin, yet of hope.
Here in this graveyard, with their broken wheels,
Disyoked and idle, in confusion lie
Life's empty chariots, heaped above each other ;
The race all run, the steeds like vapour vanished,
And the impetuous charioteer gone up
To wear the garland that he ran for here.

So muse I o'er his dust, and oft recall
The pleasant past of fellowship and joy.
O days for ever green, for ever dear !
Palm-trees in the now silent wilderness
Of irrecoverable youth ; glad isles
At which we touched, when voyaging across
That ocean which we navigate but once.
I seem to see these palms, these islands still ;
Their glow is mellow, but yet matchless all,
In life's calm twilight, like some Abenberg

That catches the last rays of the low sun,
When evening steals along the Alpine vale.

I found him once,—'tis an old story now,—
In a soft morn of August stretched asleep
Within a shaded glen, arched o'er and o'er
With pendulous birch. The breeze went freshly by,
And the black moss clung to the broken rocks,
O'er which, thro' heath and fern and roses scant,
The runnel from the mountain trickled down,
Groping its way in darkness to the sea.
Pale as his own pale dream the dreamer lay ;
Light fell upon his forehead, and his hand
Held fast the pen, as if he still would write,
And still would think. The sheep were browsing near,
And the sly raven sought to steal the pages,
That flitted loosely in the busy wind,
Taking their way to the broad pool below.
I stopped the straying thoughts, and gave them back
To their unconscious owner, as he woke,
And thanked me for the treasure I had saved.
As I returned the pages, thus I read
The written thoughts, not worthy to be lost :—
' The basis of man's law is sad despair
Of human rectitude, or dark belief
Of ineradicable ill ; and all in it
Is stern repression and imperious threat.
It is by penalties the world is ruled.
The key to the slow mysteries of time
Is creature-evil,—the fragility
And helplessness of all that is not God.
Long has man laboured with his iron bars

To imprison the volcano, which he hears
Roaring beneath him, ready to devour.
Long has he toiled, with bulwarks reared to heaven,
To break the rage of storms he cannot lay ;
Or within walls of stone to circumscribe
The unblunted lightning which he cannot quench.
He sees the evil, but the cure he knows not ;—
And yet that evil was his own : 'twas he
Who sowed the earth with poison ; who took out
From the sweet air its health ; who lighted up
The fires beneath ; who let the tempest loose,
At whose assaults he stands aghast in fear.
In the great Potter's moulding of this clay,
So perverse and rebellious, we discern
Power, but more wisdom. In His purpose vast,
Of still evoking light from the abyss
Of the profoundest gloom, which creaturehood
Has drawn around itself and round its world,
We see the patience of a heavenly love,
Which clasps all being in its dear embrace,
And seeks our love by loving to the last ;
We hear the voice that daily bids us rise ;
And all things here, if rightly used by us,
Would help us to obey. The hammer-stroke
That smites us to the earth yet says, Arise ;
Grief wounds that it may heal ; the steady drill
Of daily toil is that by which brave men
Rise up into true manhood ; hunger calls
To the high feast, and bids us diet on
The life-containing bread, which whoso eats
Becomes immortal, like the bread he feeds on.'

We parted not for hours ; the joyous day
Was far too glad for parting, and the scene
Too fair not to be revelled in together.
Our walk was by the sea, and it was gold ;
We breathed the mountain air, and it was balm ;
We drank the well, and found its waters pure ;
We sought the stream, and it was musical ;
We looked up to the heavens, and all was light ;
We listened to the cuckoo from afar,
Hid in the dreamy forest, like a brook
Warbling unseen its happy, simple lay.
So judged we that a true man's words and thoughts
Should ever be. . . . And so it was with him.
He did not try to make men think him wise,
By clothing his lean thoughts in broken mist.
He did not write in ecstasies, nor speak
Mysterious words which have but half a meaning.
No sounding torrents rushed along his lines ;
Few seraphs graced his pages ; angel-wings
Were not extended there ; no triple sun
Burst from the broad, black wave, to countercheck
The hosts of stubborn night. He sung his song,
His own clear song, and sung it well. Men heard,
And took in all its melody and truth.
Better than oracle or mystery
Was calm, full speech, which no man might mistake,
But which, within each word, contained some seed
Of everlasting health and noble life,
Making this poor world richer and more wise.
We took our last look of abating day
From that majestic pinnacle of rock

Which fronts the deep, and breasts the fretful wave.
We watched the struggling sunshine, ruby-bright,
Caught in the meshes of the rising cloud
That swung across the waters, and which seemed
Part of both sky and sea,—more heaven than earth.

Peace to the pallid waste, across whose face
Yon sea-bird sails to reach its craggy home,
In that lone island anchored far at sea,
The dread of shipwrecked men, upon whose rocks
The laden merchant barque has gone to pieces,
Strewing the shore with odours and with gems !
Peace to the dying day, across whose face
Darkness is spreading deep her raven veil,
Lest mocking eyes should look upon the form
Of the unshrouded and uncovered dead !
Calmer and calmer grows the calm night air,
Cooling the hot pulse of the fevered earth. . . .
And so we turn our faces to the east,
In hope of day once more ; for always day
Is the world's hope, to which she lifts her eye,
However weary and however sad
The nights have been. Oh ! soothing sweet,
Beyond what words can utter, is the thought
That 'mid the imperfection all around,
The perfect somewhere does exist, instinct
With life unquenchable, tho' dormant now,
And that or late or soon, 'twill surely come.
They say that from the far and lonely stars
There cometh heat to us low dwellers here ;
None from the nearer moon : so the true hope,
Full of its own unborrowed warmth and light,

Is better than the nearer glow of things
Less real, though seeming greater. Whether we
Are moving toward it, or it to us,
It matters not ; the meeting day must come,
When no love shall be distant, and no light
Be dim or trembling. The unconscious earth
Moves on its way undrifting, yet without
Or helm or sail or pilot ; so all things
Are moving out of darkness into light,
Even when they seem most still and motionless.
What the great day may be, what it may bring,
We know not. It is said that fire shall seize
The stubborn earth, and take possession of
The universal air ; that the still stars,
Their steerage gone, shall rush out into space,
Or crash together in stupendous ruin,
Quenching each other's light, or, it may be,
Raising their blazes higher ; and that out
Of this confusion and commixture wild
Will rise the endless beauty and the calm
Of universal order, ne'er again
To be disturbed or marred. It may be so,
Or not ; a few swift years will tell the tale.

Homewards we moved, tho' slow. The listless winds
Went to and fro across the sleeping grass ;
The cheerful waves, that slept not day nor night,
Sung their old songs to us as on we passed ;
And we gave back the music, soft and low.
The air was peace ; the mists seemed happy dreams ;
Star-loving silence gently breathed around ;
Night, with its precious balm of secret health,

Dropped down upon the wave, and filled the sky ;
One slender belt of cloud revealed the line
Where sky and sea were meeting lovingly,
Each seeking for itself the last embrace
Of the last sunbeam, as it smiled adieu
To the dim hills of the envermeiled west.
The profile of dead nature, as it lay
Beneath us in the dimness, spoke of calm
And tender beauty, such as noontide knows not,
With all the sunshine of its glowing life.

So parted we that night : he o'er the moor,
That lay between him and his home, took way ;
I up the mountain to the glen beyond.
Dear paths, which steps of friendship have made dear !
For spots are holy which beloved feet
Have trod, or upon which beloved eyes
Have gazed. O labyrinths of love and life,
Of faith and doubt, of vision and of blindness,
Our being's daily riddle !—Who shall give
The unwinding thread that leads us calmly out
From your dim thickets into open day ?

O earnest faith, and earnest unbelief !
Are ye both one, as many tell us now ?
And do ye both conduct to one sure goal ?
Or as we sow shall we not also reap ?
Eternal faith, eternal unbelief,
Have they not separate offsprings ? Or are both
The parents of a boundless blank ? Is truth
A dream, or something colder than a dream ?
Is certainty a thing which creaturehood
Can never hope for ? Being and non-being,

Are they the same,—mere words of man, no more ?
We have lived long enough if this be all.
Being of beings ! Teach a doubting world
What being is,—what its own being means !

Days dimly pass, and I return once more
To my long work of love, the folding out
And slow deciphering of these pages old,
In which I live again my former life,—
One life, yet many lives, I call it truly ;
The lives of others in their varied freshness,
Like ivy twined in greenness round my own.

Here, then, folds out another of these scrolls ;
Old, but still plain and legible ; half worn,
Yet with the small familiar characters
Just as they were when first I read its lines.
Here is the seal, sharp as when first impressed ;
One little dint upon its edge, as if
The hand that sealed had shaken in its pressure.
Here are the waving lines, the blots, the bends,
And turns and interlinings, that reveal
At one quick glance the writer, and recall
The image of remembered worth and sweetness,—
The face of age and wisdom, yet of one
Far younger than she seemed ; for change and care
Had on her features done their mellowing work,
And the whole womanhood within came out
In loving gentleness and patient grace,
Sooner by many a year than might have been :
As if in haste to see the finished form,
Sorrow had, in impatient eagerness,

Snatched the slow chisel from the lingering hand
Of Time, and with a cunning all its own,
Had, from the girl's bright buoyancy of feature,
Struck out the staid maturity of woman ;
Each line a history, each shade a record
Of conflicts and of hard-won victory.
The dreams shut up within her drooping eyes
Came out and showed themselves; the hopes and
fears

That wrought within her soul had found their way
To her whole outer being,—in her tones
Speaking with chastened softness ; in her steps
Moving with quiet grace ; the silken life
Of childhood wrought with skill into a texture
Of bolder hue and firmer fibre ; yet
The woman, all the woman, still was there.
No gloom spoke from her eye, or on her brow
Sat with a melancholy shade ; her lips,
Fresh from some ruby mine, betrayed their birth,
And sparkled like the morn, with earnest smiles,
That spoke of the deep love within ; her face,
Quiet and lovable, like autumn sunshine,
Took and returned the gladness all around.

' 'Tis light that casts the shadow,' thus she writes.
' And thus my life has been ; its many shades
Have come to me as messengers of light,
And in the shadow I could read the sun.
Life was too bright for me at first, it wrapt
My soul in ecstasy and earthliness.
This is my resting-place, I said ; here is
My heaven, and these my gods and goddesses.

It was too bright to last, yet, while it lasted,
It hid the better life and brighter heaven.

‘The stroke of evil smote me, yet I felt
In the sore smiting a deep joy begun,
And midnight seemed to me a softer noon.
Out from the dazzling lamps, whose sickening light
Filled the false halls of gaiety and mirth
And soul-subduing music, to the hill,
Which night was visiting, I hastened forth,
And drew in with each liberated breath
What day denied me,—long and silent draughts
Of the delicious darkness. Now the rock,
The desert rock, was smitten by the hand
That knew the *when* and *how* of smiting well.
Forth gushed the heavenly waters, never more
To cease their flow, and, with their freshening stream,
To quench the thirst, and turn the wilderness
Into a garden, where all fruits and flowers
Hang out their healing sweetness, and exhale
Their blessed balm into the broken heart.

‘The wine of earth, which I had drunk so long
From an o’erbrimming cup, had lost its sparkle.
I knew its adder’s bite, its scorpion-sting ;
I knew, too, how it can, with secret spell,
Intoxicate and poison. It was gone :
The cup was broken and the wine was spilt !
In place of it there came the sapphire cup,
All fresh from heaven and sparkling with its joy,—
The cup of blessing, filled with wine of peace
And health celestial. Then I heard the voice
Speak from above in solemn tenderness,

The voice of the long slighted and despised :
"My flesh is meat, my blood is drink indeed."
I took the cup, I drank, and found in it
The wine of heaven to renovate and heal.

'For even here, upon these famished plains,
We eat the bread that maketh dead men live,
The eternal loaf which feedeth earth and heaven ;
We drink the wine which sobers all who taste it,—
Wine of a vintage which earth knoweth not ;
Wine which brings down the fevered pulse of sin,
Making it soft and gentle as a child's.

'Earth's achings, too, I had been made to taste ;
The sweet and bitter both had been my lot :
First sweet, then bitter, and both born of time,
Both shaken from the world's enchanted tree.
The sweet was passing sweet to me, the bitter
Was bitterness in essence ; both are now
Forgotten like a sick man's stormy dreams.
'Tis rest, but still the tempest shakes the sky ;
'Tis peace, but battle thunders all around.

'Ah, surely nothing ripens here below !
There is no sunshine that can sweeten aught.
Our autumns bring no mellowing gentleness ;
The climate suits not, and the air is chill ;
The winds that walk our valleys tear the blossoms,
And scatter all the love which they enfold ;
The mistral smites the Etrurian olive-bud,
And the sirocco blights the Syrian bloom.
Toil, passion, fret, hate,—these are not the rays
To ripen things of heaven ; more genial far
Must be the blaze which such soft service needs,

Or which can draw out all the secret stores
Of sweet and noble in the soul of man
Or woman, till the whole perfection comes
At once, like clusters in September's vine.

‘I found, what, soon or late, all else have known ;
That not for ever is the love of man
To man on earth : it breaks, it fades, it dies.
The lightning strikes it, or the worm destroys,
Or the frost chills it into apathy.
Man loves and loves not ; fondly doats to-day,
To-morrow freezes ; few love on and on.
The truest love that ever filled a soul
Has ebbed, and left the heart all barrenness ;—
The love that never changes is not here.
All round the vaults of this our human life
Are ranged in silent rows the empty jars
Of love's delicious wine, exhaled and gone,
Or spilt like water on the absorbing ground.

‘The first strange drop of wormwood, as it fell
Into my cup, I can remember well.
It was not broken friendship, loss of gold,
Nor crushed ambition, nor a blighted name,
Nor woman's wounds of disappointed love.
'Twas the slow death-bed of one dear as life,
Summed up in all the sadness of that morn
When she went up from us, and left behind
Only the mortal raiment, soon to fall
In pieces and be laid beneath the turf,
Till the glad day of the unfolding comes.
Death never seemed so far, nor life so near ;—
O bud of beauty, gem of spring and hope,

Half open and half shut, like twilight star
Ascending from the silence of the sea,
Girt with the morn, a thing all light and love !
On thy smooth forehead sat immortal youth ;
Thy lip was that of one who could not die,—
Sweetness and strength compounded, — which was
fullest

You could not say, so perfect was the mixture.
In hope we long had watched ; now hope is o'er,
And fear with hope ; anxieties are gone,
Because the worst has come ; the loved has left us.
Death is the death of care, even tho' it be
The mother of all grief ; for care and grief,
Like two pale streams that long have flowed together
Pass into one, and each absorbs the other.

‘ The pressure of the hand had ceased ; the eye
Had lost its diamond sparkle ; the cold cheek
Grew colder still ; and the dishevelled hair,
With its fair curls like twining honeysuckle,
Was flung back on the pillow's love-smoothed snow ;
And the full marble forehead now stood out
In noble grandeur, tho' the soul had left
That field, o'er which it wandered like a star,
Sometimes half-hidden, sometimes full as day,
Filling each vein and working in each line
Of soft intelligence that quivered there.
Life fluttered on a while, like some maimed dove
With broken wing and bleeding at the heart ;—
Life, like a flame just ready to take wing,
Sank and revived, departed and returned,
Then vanished, and the mortal chill came on.

‘How oft the one that we could spare the least
Is taken, and the idlers left behind !

‘A mother’s kisses, like the gentle rain,
Had come down tenderly from day to day
Upon her fair young face, and under them .
She grew to girlhood, full of budding hope,
That looked into the future with an eye
That drank in only gladness ! Now she sleeps,—
Her woman’s heart all unexpanded there,
Her woman’s love dried up in its deep well,
When its first overflow had just begun
In all its sweet translucency of joy ;
And I have laid her down for her last rest,
And the long kiss has sealed the long farewell.

‘If dreams have shadows, surely such are here ;
And there she sleeps, the shadow of a dream.

‘The light steals in upon her parted hair,
And moves across her brow, ere death has made
Her all his own. How bright that sudden gleam,
How softly has she fallen asleep beneath it,
Like snow-peak welcoming the sun’s last ray,
When twilight creeps along the darkening plains !
Life touched her gently all her girlhood thro’ ;
But little of its sorrow she had known,
Save what had come from her own buoyant heart
And its quick throbbings, as they went and came,
Like the low violet trembling in the breeze.
Yes ; there she lies ; her spirit all ebbèd out,
But resting still on her unclosèd eye,—
All stillness and all softness to the last,
Like a long, golden wave about to break

Upon a shore of gems. O bitter grief!
Like sword of double edge, when *he* has come,
The dark destroyer, with his poisoned spear,
Which neither skill nor armour may repel,
To smite our loveliest, whose arms had been
Linked lovingly in ours from infancy,
To cut asunder soul from soul, to tear
In pieces, like the blossoms of the spring,
The loves and hopes and joys that had begun
To burst in beauty, like immortal buds
Dropt down from heaven upon this wondering earth,
Prophetic of a summer rich in fruit,
And calm in the deep beauty of its skies.
The serpent's fang has left its scar upon
The rounded dimple of her cheek ; but she
Has passed beyond the poison and the pain.

'Eternity shall never shed its leaves ;
'Tis only summer in its groves of green :
It knoweth not the chilliness of age.
The forehead wrinkles not ; the living light
Takes on no shade : the face is ever fair,
The tresses blanch not, and the eye still sparkles
Without or change or end. Oh, well with us
When the undying gladness has begun !
It cannot come too soon. Each day appears
An age, which with immeasurable stretch
Goes out beyond the range of human hope.
The future is our anchorage, amid
The tides and tempest here ; tho' long delayed,
The rest is coming for a weary race.

'With her all life was doubled, and I missed not

Others if she were left ; but her departure
Quenched all the rest. We can be comforted
In the sad silence of the loneliest night
If but one voice be left that whispers love.
The music-teeming air, bereft of all
Its myriad cadences save one, is still
Vocal and sweet ; the one makes up for all :
But when that one is gone all music dies.

‘ I looked about for comfort ; went to one
Faithful and wise and good ; but soon returned
To speak my sorrow to myself alone.
He had not suffered : how then could he speak
To sufferers ? In presence of deep grief
Let him be dumb, or let his words be few.
He had no son or daughter laid beneath
The swelling turf ; he could not understand
How to walk softly thro’ the churchyard paths,
Or how to wipe the dew from gentle graves.
Ere man can comfort man, he first must suffer,—
The tearless dry no tears ; the whole in heart
Bind up no broken spirits ; ’tis not theirs
To mix and minister the balm that heals.
It is by sorrow that God trains His own,
And moulds them for the highest service here,
Like His who, as the Man of sorrows, knew
To soothe the sad, to speak the words that cheer.
For common duty between man and man,
All who have hands to toil, or lips to speak,
Are in their measure fit ; but for high work,—
For skill in dealing with the finest tissues
Of man’s most inmost being when laid bare

With griefs that dry up life ; with bleeding souls
That mutely plead for sympathy and solace,
They only can be trusted who have been
Trained in the school which teaches how to teach.
For weighty are the words of sore-tried men :
They find, we know not how, their solemn way
Into our inner essence ; like the voice
Of prophet, speaking language not of earth.

‘ Could He not teach us without sorrow’s stroke,
Or mould us without all this hourly pressure,
Or purge our dross with less of furnace-heat,
Or cure us with a sweeter draught than this ? ’

‘ Nay, but, O child of time, whose dwelling is
Between the two eternities, who,—who
Art thou, replying against Him with whom
Is no reply, and proudly arguing
Against the wisdom of the Only Wise ?
And who art thou, that callest hard and stern
A discipline which trains thy headlong will,
Imparts to it a heavenly pliancy,
And tears the fibre of self-will and pride
From its rough texture, till it sweetly moves
In unreluctant unison with His
High and all-perfect will, who thus hath tuned it ?
Yes, who art thou, that callest long and sore
The process, whose design is to strip off
Incrusted evil, and to perfect thee ;
To bring out all thy silent depths of life
And thought and character, which but for this
Had lain within thee cold and unrevealed ?
Does the harp murmur at the cunning stroke

Of the musician as he sweeps its chords ?
Does the cold canvas cry aloud against
The hand of genius, flinging on its face
The magic of a thousand lights and shades,
The colour and the freshness and the life
Which but for that bold touch had never been ?
Does the rough marble blame the chisel's sharpness,
Or taunt the sculptor with unskilfulness,
Because he did not with one master-stroke
Draw out the beauty from the shapeless stone ?

‘How much we should have lost, if these slow years
Of sore, but ever-working discipline,
Had been cut down into a single day !
How little of ourselves should we have known,
How little of the heart's deep mysteries,
How little of the Chastener's power and love
And patient wisdom, ever fresh and new,
Had it not been for these oppressive hours
When all the light of earth went out from us,
And left us in this desert desolate !
How much of glory should our God have lost,
Had no such seasons drawn out His full heart,
And made us feel, in weariness and pain,
The pressure of the everlasting arm !

‘How else should we have learned what angels
know not,
What angels cannot teach, what God's own Son
Learned only by a life like ours on earth
Of weariness and pain and poverty,—
The Father's power to solace and to cheer,
The filial look of trust, and the response

Of lovingness from Him to whom we look,—
The tender touch of a paternal hand,
That held us up and wiped away our tears,
That in the day of suffering smoothed the brow
Which agony had wrinkled ; above all,
Which thus crushed out of us each earthly taint,
And taught us what we ne'er shall know in heaven,
The evil of a human heart, the dark
Malignancy of sin that brought to man
And to man's earth such ages of the curse,
The fruit of one sad sin,—a sin which seemed
So innocent, that none but God could know
The eternal woes to issue from its womb ?'

Here lies the letter of a muser, fond
To read the deeper features of the age,
And to discover what lies underneath
The unbeliefs and the beliefs, the loves
And hatreds, the alliances and strifes
Of men and minds, as they ferment and fume,—
The occult affinities of things that differ,
And the repulsions of what seem the same :
The self-will reigning everywhere, and yet
The cry for universal brotherhood.
'What means all this?' he asks. 'The sounds I hear
Deep thundering over Europe, rolling round
The labouring globe, they mean far more than meets
The general ear. They come from the great depths
Of pained humanity, with fevered heart,
Tossing its limbs, as if by change of couch
Or change of posture it could heal itself.

The swollen veins, the bloodshot eye of nations,
The secret sobbing of ten thousand hearts,
The cry for water to allay the thirst,
For bread to satisfy the famished spirit,
For rest to ease the impatient weariness ;—
These tell of maladies beyond the reach
Of man's profoundest art or boldest fraud.
O sick beyond the power of wine or gold,
Of cunning statecraft or despotic steel,
Of politician, priest, philosopher,—
Sick to the inmost soul, and He alone,
Who heals and loves, unsought for and unknown !
O sick to death, and in thy dark despair,
Seeking to gods who cannot heal or save,
Sending thy midnight messengers afar
To Ammon or Olympia, if that from
The dead, some voice of hope at length may come ;
Since heaven is shut, and earth contains no friend,
And only hell is open to thy call.

‘ Strange groping after the unseen, the world
That lies without us, into which all go,
But out of which no one has yet come back
To tell us what he saw ! Strange appetite
Of unbelief, for the incredible !
Blind passion for the mystical and dim,
For what is dark and magical, for error
That looks like truth, and truth that looks like
error,—

The old priestly lust of power invisible
Over men's souls and bodies,—to be gods
Controlling life and death ; by touch or word,

To pour into the mortal, deathlessness,
Without a resurrection or a grave.

‘So faith dies down, and the poor shrivelled soul
Closes against the love of love, against
Belief in the divinely true, the certainties
Of hope, which, like the stedfast vault above,
Gird us around, and stay our tossing hearts
Amid the uncertainties of time and evil.
Thus the hot air of an unhealthful age,
From which the bracing energy is gone,
Poisons the sweet blood of untainted youth,
Turning it all to fever ; making dim
The dawning lustre of a star-bright eye,
Till shadows fall where noon alone should be.
Thus the last snare of the ensnarer, set
With matchless art, secures its victim man.
Thus the world struggles on the desperate hook
Of the dark fisher, to be landed soon,
His sure and easy prey. Men heed not warnings,
When faith in the invisible has perished.
Prophet and conjuror are both alike
To him who has no future and no haven.
The mirror is not for the blind, and to
The deaf both lute and trumpet speak in vain.
The issue is at hand ; the ripened evil
Calls itself good, and glories in its ripeness.
All things unknot themselves ; the keystone drops,
And the old arch collapses ; into shreds
The banner rends ; the strong man fights in vain,—
The shield is broken, and the sword has dropt
From the strong warrior of a thousand fields.

‘ Health stealeth slowly, slowly in, as if
Afraid to enter ; sickness with one stride
Passes into the chamber ; with one stroke
Smites down the strongest ; the deep tide of life
Ebbs swiftly, but flows in with tardy wave.

‘ And so we wait in breathless awe and trust
For what is surely coming. Some men say
Earth’s sun shall never set, while others point
To the thin shadows lengthening o’er the fields,
And with forecasting finger bid us mark
Yon clouds of muffled tempest, moving on,
Like an armada with its thunder-store
Of recompense for ages of old wrong.
Others more hopeful or less wise, or both,
Tell us the worst is past ; for see
The storm has spent itself, and the last bolt
Has struck the peak ; the clouds are limbering up ;
The dread artillery is moving off
The field ; and the rough air will soon be calm.’

‘ And where wert Thou, O better than the best
Of all on earth, my everlasting friend ?
O tardum gaudium meum, as to Thee
The old father said, confessing days of sin,
(So read I in this scroll that open lies,
The record of a life once all but wasted,
Yet plucked at last from vanity, and nailed
In happy consecration to the cross).
Not always felt nor loved, but ever near ;
Not always sought, but ever found when sought ;
Created beauty oft preferred to Thine,

And creature-love usurping this vain heart
Which owed Thee all its homage : this poor world
Admired and worshipped, Thou alone forgot,
And Thy fair world to come, with all its fulness,
Shut out from eye and heart. O once unloved
And once unknown, now loved and known the best,
Where was Thy voice amid the voices then ?
And where was Thy companionship amid
The brotherhoods and fellowships of earth ?
For Thou wert ever speaking, yet I heard not,
And ever following, yet I fled from Thee,
And ever loving, yet I loved Thee not.
Strewed by ten thousands o'er my daily path,
Like flowers and gems and ingots of fair gold,
Thy gracious thoughts and purposes I find,
As I look back along the narrow vista
Of this one life, so great in Thy esteem,
And yet so madly flung away by us,
As if no pregnant future hung upon it.
Like the bright dew they sparkled everywhere :
I find them in each step I took, in each
Mutation of my life ; my being's orbit
Has swept all these into its ample curve.
This poor and foolish history of mine
Teems with Thy tender love, in every part
Ennobled and enriched and dignified
By its connection with Thyself, and with
Thy unbeginning past, Thy endless future.

' The day was Thine, and yet I saw Thee not
In its glad ministries of health and light.
The night was Thine, and yet I felt Thee not

In the cool darkness, as Thy careful hand,
Like a fond mother's in her watchfulness,
Thy star-embroidered curtain round me drew ;
The hills were Thine, and yet I found Thee not
On their soft slopes or in their shadowy glens,
Or in the sculptured cliffs that tell of art
Beyond all art, of power beyond all power.
The streams were Thine, yet, when I drank of them,
I did not drink of Thee, O living fount,
Nor quench my thirst at the eternal well ;
Nor let the influx of Thy mighty law
Fill the void channels of this dried-up heart.
The sea was Thine,—the unmeasurable main,
Free as the wind, yet fettered as the rock,
Swung to and fro by the great orbs above,
And bathing in their daily, nightly glow,
Yet in its vastness I discerned Thee not,
Nor in its majesty acknowledged Thine.
The flowers were Thine,—all thro' the well-pleased air
From their bright censers breathing incense round,
And brightening earth's low fields with hues of heaven ;
I read no love in these, nor saw in Thee
The birthplace of creation's loveliness.
In exultation o'er the past I cried,
“ The world is changed, and better days have dawned ;
The golden age has come back all in bloom,
And the hard iron time is at an end :
And gold is taken at its proper price.
Men may securely mock Cassandra's tale,
And smile to silence her prophetic woes.
Now life is at its noon, an endless noon ;

The shadow has gone by, the substance comes ;
Death has now done its worst, its shafts are spent ;
Evil is disappearing like a plague
Which has fulfilled its mission ; the sweet air
Distilleth only health and length of days."

'And where wert Thou, O gracious Son of God,
Son of the Blessed, ever-pitiful ?
And what wert Thou to me, in days like these,
When youth and childhood followed other gods
And other Christs, hewing out for themselves
The cisterns that broke as soon as hewn ?
To me Thy cross was nought but a rough plank
Cut by a Roman axe from Jewish tree,
To which, or justly or unjustly, some
Poor Hebrew criminal was nailed in scorn.
I saw it, but I heeded not ; the world
Like a rich veil concealed the Crucified,
And hid the wondrous cross of Golgotha.
I passed it and repassed it ; but it won
From me no look of homage or of faith.
Absorbed in creaturehood, the things beyond,
What the eye saw or the hand fondly clasped,
To me were shadows or disturbing dreams :
And youth's light barque, with May-day pennon gay,
Swept over a fair ocean, all whose shores
Were emeralds. Some spell had softly bound me ;
I would not have it broken ; yet it broke :—
It broke at last, the golden veil was gone
That hid the cross ; the world had disappeared,
And face to face, I found myself alone
With Him whom I had scorned and crucified.

Weary I found myself, and here was rest ;—
Eternal blessing for the child of time :
Poor, and the riches of the universe
Were gathered here : I needed but to take.
Strange years of vanity had taught my soul
That this world has no wells ; if e'er it had,
They have long since run dry. But here there welled
The life-fount whose deep gushings are for ever.
A shadowy faith had made all truth untrue,
And all reality to me unreal.
I had believed in dreams, and called them bliss ;
I had believed in mists and clouds and air,
Calling them fields and flowers and palaces.
Now all went up in vapour : I was left
Without a refuge ; with a heart as blank
As the wide basin of a dried-up sea,
Or the dark sweep of some far upland heath,
Whose very weeds the unsparing hurricane
Has torn up by the roots, or trodden down.

‘ O summer-love, that springs and blooms and dies,
Within one soft, short noon, leaving us bare,
Like a scorched Eden, or a blasted palm,
Is there no summer when your sun has set,
No second summer sweeter than the first ?
Has ocean but one pearl, or heaven one star ?

‘ Yes, well for me that the old cross still stood !
The rush of ages has not shaken it ;
The wars of earth have left it all unharmed ;
The fall of kingdoms has not touched its greatness ;
The slow decay of cities and of temples
Has not corroded its perennial green ;

The shock of storms and earthquakes, sweeping o'er
A tottering earth, has left it where it stood,
Untrembling and unbroken ; the one thing
In all this crumbling globe that cannot fall.
To some it seems the relic of an age
Which, with its good or evil, is all gone.
To some it seems in sombre gloom to stand
Beclad in sackcloth ; some would drape it o'er
With ornament, to hide its ruggedness ;
And some would hew it down with hellish axe ;—
To me it shone out like a central sun,
Diffusing over earth resistless health,
With life and freedom and supernal peace.
There He who tasted death dispenseth life ;
He who Himself was weary giveth rest ;
He over whom the sun, for three sad hours,
Was darkened, giveth light,—Himself the Sun !

‘ In a dark world how bright that glory beams,
How excellent its splendour and its power !
That naked cross, untouched by human art,
Uncarved, unpolished by the hand of man,
Just as it stood on Golgotha, outside
The wall of Salem ; when the eternal Son
As the One Victim, going forth to die,
Ascended it and took with Him our guilt :
That Roman cross, set up on Hebrew soil,
Where Jew and Gentile meet, where earth and heaven
Have come together, like converging orbs,
Henceforth to be but one ; when every race
And every nation of the populous globe
Shall gather to this glorious centre, round

The Christ that has been, is, and is to be :—
One heaven, one earth, one kingdom, and one fold,
The centre of God's boundless universe,
Home of the royal priesthood, fountainhead
Of ministry for the eternal ages, seat
Of holy service for the hosts of God.

'The oneness lingers ; yet from far we hear
Strains that foretell its advent, sweet and slow :
Let us be still and listen ; earthly motion
Mars the descending melody ; our ears
Are blunted with the jarring sounds of time.
Shut out the babbling voices of the world,
And let the one great voice be heard ; as if
Thou and that voice were all the universe.
Be still, be still ; let not thy throbbing pulse
Deafen thine ear : ask not for sign, nor say,
Belief comes only with the touch or sight.
All fragrance is invisible ; the clear air
Receives the rose-breath, but betrays it not
To keenest eye or ear ; and all unseen
The happy perfume floats on every side,
But by its sweetness known. The ministry
Of holy feet, as they move daily thro'
The world's great hospital, is without noise.
'Tis not the stars alone that speak to us
In their articulate and beamy silence :
The livingness of nature all around
Breathes up the gentlest of all gentle voices,
Had we but ears to hear the melody.

'Tis not the din of hammers that proclaims
The rising temple. It is not in sound

That strength is stored. The tempest does the
wrecking,

It is the calm that does the building up.

That which the angels know so well, and that

Which man needs yet to learn so greatly, is

The ministry of silence, the strange offices

Of power and love performed by the unheard.

‘The true man sounds no trumpet, and his work,

Unheralded, is done ere men can see

Who did it, or put forth the bustling hand

To help what needs no help ; itself alone,

Like angel-breath, resistless yet unfelt,—

Or felt but as the needle feels the pole,

Or as the ocean feels the far-off moon.’

BOOK XII.

‘ I CROSSED the brook to-day, as musical
And frolicsome as in bright days long gone ;
With silvery leap skipping from rock to rock,
Like a fair child on whose white silken dress
Plays the quick sunbeam. Thro’ the mead I went
Starred with wild daisies, all in snowy bloom.
Above me the ribbed granite precipice,
Festooned with overhanging ivy-wreaths’—
(So writes the buoyant pen of one who went
From day to day, o’er hill and moor and stream,
To feed his portion of the flock of heaven).—
‘ Spread o’er the knolls, or clustered in the glens,
The cottage chimneys scattered their grey smoke
Upon the sleepy breeze. The road was rough,
And the big boulder blocked my onward path
Upon the ridge that overhangs the wave.
I climbed it, and sat down to gaze around.
The mountains rose in majesty above me ;
The sea broke far beneath me, just so far
As I could hear its dash upon the rocks.
A little child was playing with the ripples ;
The idiot boy walked idly to and fro,
Watching the far-off sail with vacant eye,

His hands behind him, holding each the other ;
The dim stripes went and came upon the wave,
The clouds watched leisurely their own strange shadows,
And sometimes showed and sometimes hid the sun :
The sea-bird screamed and flashed along the ooze,
Or plunged into the brine to snatch his prey.
The breath of day was sweet, and its warm pulse
Quickened all nature with a double glow.

‘I sat and gazed ;—a flock of sheep went by,
Entrusted to a cripple’s care ; they turned
Aside and wandered everywhere : with much
Labour and weariness, he followed them
Along their devious ways, mile after mile,
Till one by one he gathered them, and brought
The undivided flock to the green fields,
That lay before them in the pleasant glen
Just out of sight, where shelter, shade, and stream
Awaited them. Even such the way, I said,
In which the better Shepherd brings His flock,
Weary and straggling, o’er a hundred wastes,
Thro’ perilous uplands to the fields of life.
Often I’ve wondered how, with such fierce foes,
Such storms and snares and meagre pasturage,
And with such poor and feeble shepherding,
The little flock of earth should ever reach
The eternal fold. And yet they all are there,
Or shall be soon, not one left wandering here,
Prey to the prowling wolf, or ’mid the rocks
Famished and lorn and lost ; for above all,
Still looking down upon His helpless ones
And loving them with undecaying love,

Sits the Good Shepherd, He who gave His life
For the dear flock, and who forsakes them not.

‘ Good Shepherd ! in these days of subtle ill,
When all the elements of earth and sky
Are on the side of doubt ; when unbelief
Assumes the garb of faith, speaks with its voice,
And steals its holiest words ; when the dark foe,
Unwearied seeks his victims ; day and night,
Watch Thy lone flock ; and tho’ the shepherds here
Know little of the Shepherd’s love and skill,
Take Thou Thyself the rod and crook and staff ;
Do Thou the work which only Thou canst do !
Watch Thou the fold, for every beast of prey
That loves the night, howls round its broken wall.
Fetch home the wanderer ; bid the loiterer haste,
Lest night come down ere shelter has been found.
Bind up the broken, bid the weary rest ;
Soothe sorrow with Thy words of sweetest grace ;
Be eyes to the benighted and the blind ;
Lay Thy strong hand on frowardness, and let
The wilful learn submission to Thy will.
Grasp firm, with hand that cannot let them go,
The timid lambs that look all round for help :
Unspotted from the world, O Shepherd, keep them ;
Let not their feet be taken in its snares.
The sky is sullen, and its air is cold ;
The day has no kind promise in its air ;
The wind goes by in anger, threatening soon
To come again and do its work of waste :
The lightning lurketh in yon ragged cloud,
Ready to strike. The rivers are dried up,

The pastures poor and scanty, interspersed
With poison-weeds, so like the pleasant grass,
That, in their hunger, the unwary sheep,
Unwatched, unwarned by heedless shepherds here,
Feed on the beauteous poison-leaf, and die.
O flock, O fold, O Shepherd good and true,
Must it be ever thus? Hast Thou, O Christ,
Forgot Thine own, or has Thy love been foiled?
Thy sheep are bleating, and they plead with Thee.
Hast Thou no answer in this day of cold,
Bleak half-belief or worse, when faith pines o'er
The dried-up pastures which once promised fair?
And must Thy flock appeal to Thee in vain?
Is Thine hand shortened that it cannot save?
Hast Thou begun to break the bruised reed?
Hast Thou resolved to quench the smoking flax?

‘When God is angry with His flock, they say,
He sends them a blind shepherd in His wrath.
Be no such blindness mine! No indolence,
Idling away the living hours of morn,
And dreaming all day long of noble work,
Yet leaving all that noble work undone.
No love of self be mine, as if for self
This life were given; no shrinking from the toil,
The heat, the frost, the tempest or the night,
If one poor sheep be out upon the moor.

‘One such lorn waif I still remember well,
Tho’ he has passed the border long ago,
And gone into the upper fold, where storms
Vex not, nor hot winds dry the pasture up.

He lived in yonder heath-thatched hut, o'er which
That graceful mountain-ash is casting now
Its flitting shadow, as the quick breeze shakes it.
'Tis a poor dwelling for humanity :
The rain drips thro' the roof, the gable-chinks
Let in the wintry chills, the floor is clay :
The lattice small and dim, tho' round it trails
The sweetest rose that ever blushed in June.
In front the little patch of garden breathes
Fragrance and health, from many a beaming flower
That lifts its beauty to the admiring sun,
As daily he smiles down upon this waste.

‘ There he was born ; and there it was he heard
In childhood the immortal words of peace,
The news of life, thro' the almighty death
Of Him who went up to the cross for us,
That the great darkness might be overcome,
And sunshine, brighter than the day's, descend
To breathe eternal brightness over earth.
The Just One bound, the unjust goeth forth ;
The captive's chain, transferred to other limbs,
No more forbids the victim to be free !—

‘ But from his home he went ; and his home-faith
Passed out of him ; and one by one each gem
Of cherished truth was flung upon the sand.
He would be greatly wise ; he would create
His own high wisdom, and to none would he
Be debtor, least of all to those who lived
In other days, and thought the olden thought.
Save to himself, he would owe nought to any.
He would believe in matter, not in spirit ;

In darkness, not in light ; in unbelief,
And not in faith ; in guesses, not in truth ;
In newness, not in oldness ; and his creed
Should wholly be his own and not another's.
Whether this green earth had an owner, he
Would find out for himself ; whether above
These skies there was a region, goodlier,
And more unchanging, he would for himself
Make sure ;—philosophy would tell him all,
Or tell him there was nothing to be told.

‘ But darkness could not bring him rest, and doubt
Had poison in it to his soul ; he walked
In sadness to and fro ; his troubled heart
Took on the darkness it had chosen, till
His very being was a thing of doubt,
And all within was storm ; before his eyes
Thin spectres flitted ; he had lost the power
Of crediting the words of God or man.

‘ Evil became his good : he drank each cup
Presented to his lips, and what might be
Therein of sweetness or of bitterness
He asked not ; for he said that joy
Was all a fable ; he would eat and drink,
Depart and be forgotten in the earth,
Like a tired leaf that drops into the stream,
And on it takes its way to the wide sea,
In its cold depths to find a sepulchre.

‘ Self-hindered in the race of life, he blamed
All but himself ; and most of all the Being
Whose dreaded name his lips refused to name.
He threw himself upon a midnight tomb,

And between sod and star protested loud
Against his own creation. He was wronged ;
But how to right the wrong he could not find,
Or to avenge himself against his foe.
The marble flung itself against the sculptor,
And called for justice. Who had dared
Without his will to assign him such a lot ?

‘ Poor as he was, he had both read and thought ;
Yet all in vain : life was a destiny
He must fulfil, he said ; he could not shun it,
Even tho’ he would ; and he must bravely breast
The billows to the last, until he sank,
And in that sinking take revenge upon
A fate with which it was in vain to struggle.

‘ I watched his wanderings, pitied him, and strove
To win him to the love that he had lost,
And to the faith that he had cast away.
O’er many a waste I followed the stray sheep,
But it fled faster from me ; I pursued
Thro’ darkness and thro’ light, in cold and heat ;
In weariness and sorrow I went on.
But all in vain ; the wanderer fled apace,
The shepherd from his weary search returned,
Baffled in love, but not ashamed of loving.

‘ Sweet childhood, like a trampled garden, lay
Behind him and around him, meant to be
Fragrant and beautiful, but marred throughout ;
Its flowers all dead or broken. Often back
Upon it he would cast a troubled eye,
When his dark follies bore him down to earth ;—
But still he chased the wind and sowed the sand.

‘ Sin smote him to the dust at last : his god
Could not deliver in the day of ill.
And he lay down to die, returning home
After long erring years ; without a hope.
The light seemed blotted from his firmament ;
Nor sun nor stars for many days appeared.
He wished to hide himself from God and man.

‘ But hope was nearer than he thought ; it came
In ways he little looked for. The old truth,
Buried so long and trodden under foot,
Rose up to re-assert its dormant power
Within him, as he lay thus, face to face
With the near death he had so long defied.
The well-known walls seemed written o’er with it :
The cottage-hearth seemed to retain its warmth ;
His father’s grave, hard by the churchyard gate,
Beneath the elm, shone strangely bright with it :
The old hills echoed it, and to the rocks
It seemed to cleave still closer than the moss
That clothed them with a softness not their own.
The happy stream seemed to derive its mirth
From the glad words that had so often mixed
With its own music ; the benignant breeze
Bore back the hymns of childhood to his heart.
He was like one from whom all later life
Had passed away, as by some sudden spell,
And into whom his former, truer being
Had come in haste, as with transfiguring power.
It was as if some angel in his arms
Had lifted him in love, and borne him back
O’er twenty wasted years, to set him down

Once more beneath the shadow of the cross,
To have his fever cooled, his wounds bound up,
His spirit's strength restored as by a touch
From heaven, and all his worn-out being healed.

‘Yet not without a struggle; for the darkness
Fought with the light, and the deep unbelief
Repelled the faith.—But the true light was strong,
And overcame: the night gave place to day.
He seemed to stand beside the altar; there
The smoke and incense rose, and filled the air,
Covering the guilty one as with a shield.
The blood took hold of him; and its strange touch
Dissolved his guilt, as if it had not been.
Another's life was lying there instead
Of his; and all his doom he saw reversed.
Another's strength had fought the fight for him,
Another's love had won the victory,
Another had gone in for him to God,
And had prevailed. The righteous peace was sealed.

‘It was as if in him, the furthest gone
Of earth's poor waifs, forgiving love had been
Strained to the uttermost; as if for him
The mighty sacrifice of Golgotha,
Whose fulness is beyond all thought, had been
Taxed to its highest value: seldom had
Wounds such as his been healed, and stains so foul
Been blanched to purity; and seldom had
Anguish like his passed into such sweet peace,
The prelude of the peace to which he went.—
Was ever tempest ended in such calm?

‘Good Shepherd, Thou hast won Thine own at last!

The sheep is on Thy shoulders now ; Thy joy
Is greater than his own : Thou hast not sought
The lost in vain ; Thy search is ended now ;
The song begins ;—hark, how it swells afar,—
Lo, this my son was dead and is alive,
Was lost, is found ; 'tis meet we should be glad !

‘ Good Shepherd, we would know Thy tender love,
The love that knows no failure and no bounds,
And all that love has undergone for us,—
The mountains Thou hast crossed in search of us,
The floods which Thou hast breasted, the wild tracts
Of desert and of darkness Thou hast traversed,
The toil Thou barest, all the buffetings
Of tempest, all the bitterness of death
Thou hast encountered, to deliver us !
Thou followedst us, who bidst us follow Thee :
Thou restedst not till Thou hadst found for us
A rest which weariness shall ne’er invade ;
Thou canst not rest till all Thine own are gathered ;
That fold of Thine would not be what it is,
The home of gladness and of plenty, were
One, even the least of all Thine own, left out.
Blest they who find Thee, blest whom Thou hast found ;
Within Thy fold of peace they dwell secure.
Around its walls the wolf may rage in vain ;
O’er it the storm may gather : they are safe.

‘ I sought him out the night before he died.
The snow was drifting, and the impetuous gale
Shook the spare walls. Its din disturbed him not ;
The inner calm repelled the outer tempest,
And the low voice, soft stealing from above,

Filled every chamber of his happy being :
There was no room for other voices now.
"Into the valley I go down with Thee,
O Son of God," he said ; "and where Thou once
Didst rest Thee will I rest ; Thy tomb be mine,
And mine Thy resurrection : Thou in me,
And I in Thee, in death as well as life.
Each has his resting-place, and I have mine,
A heavenly pillow for an earthly bed.
I know Thou livest ; nay, Thou canst not die.
Because Thou livest, I shall also live,
And Thou wilt show to me the path of life,
For all Thy immortality is mine."

' He seemed to see within the open gate,
And his eye kindled with a brightness which
Was not of earth, as if the glow of sunrise
Upon the top of some immortal hill
Had caught his vision ; or it might have been
The glory of the city, where they need
No sun or moon to lighten them, but where
Jehovah is the everlasting light,
And the long day of mourning at an end.

' He passed away as some belated star,
Last of his fellows, in the summer dawn,
Dissolves into the gold of rising day :
The bright still bright, altho' invisible
To our short-visioned eye ; the beautiful
Lost in superior beauty, yet still fair
To other eyes beyond that rounded roof.

' So have I seen, after some sweeping storm,
When the gale sunk, the long wave wearily

Fling itself down upon the welcome sand,
Glad of a resting-place however cold.

‘I left, retracing thro’ the deep-strewn snow
My steps in darkness. I had found the lost,
And what to me was winter’s ice or wind ?
I had seen thro’ the half-unfolded gate,
And watched the worn-out wanderer passing in,
The earth-robes of this lean mortality
Exchanged for raiment richer than the noon.
That was enough. All summer gathered round me ;
The shrill pipe of the winter-blast was song,
And the bare boughs were blossoming. The snow
Transformed itself into a lily-plain,
And sudden fragrance filled the air with balm.
The stars shone out and formed the avenue
Thro’ which the wanderer had just gone home,—
A home from which he should go out no more,
In that untainted clime, whose loveliness,
Divinely luminous, divinely pure,
Knows but the sunshine of a heavenly morn.

‘I’ve known a land ; and I have called it mine ;
Than which there seems none fairer ; none so fair.
There may be smoother skies and safer seas ;
Winters less rude and springs of softer breath ;
There may be gayer gardens, ruddier fruits ;
But not to these does my soul warmly turn.
The land I’ve known has grandeur grander still ;
In rugged majesty of hill and vale
It lifts its head above its richer peers.
The tale it telleth of the wise and good,
The great in war, in council, and in love,

Is such as this old earth has seldom told.
I know the uplands where the torrents rush,
Beloved nurslings of the mountain-slope,
Chasing with silver feet each other down
Into the deep pool of the hazel glen.
I know the forests whose gaunt branches weave,
Between us and the clouds, their roof of gloom ;
Where, wandering like lost children in the wood,
The night-winds sigh for day. I've climbed the steeps
On which the boulder rests, caught in its plunge
From the grey precipice, around whose waist
The heather twines its old imperial purple,
Like robe of kings. I've watched the bluffs that fling
Their broken shadows o'er the subject sea ;
The forelands where the free, far-travelled gale
Breaks in dark wrath or breathes in summer balm ;
The lonely lakelet, like a silver cup
Set round with emerald amid the hills ;
The iris on the cold, exhaling spray
Of the lone waterfall, as it descends
Amid the verdure of a thousand firs,
When summer wanders thro' the waving woods.
I know old Cheviot's green, round summits, which
Watch the wide ocean spreading out afar,
And smile upon a hundred gushing streams
Beneath his feet, from Solway to the Tweed :
The mountains, too, at whose far-stretching base
Rome once her legions mustered, when she pierced
The Caledonian forest with her sword :
And the grey peaks of Torridon that frown
O'er the Atlantic surges, when the sun,

Like some bright bird of gold, with outspread wings,
Is seen escaping into Western night.
I know, too, the lone islands far at sea,
The ten score Hebrides, whose battlements
Defy old ocean's war, and countercheck
The long rush of the angry occident ;
The battered clefts between whose granite walls
The surge sweeps booming, where the brittle wave,
Caught in its rising by the tempest, breaks,
And spreads its sparkling fragments o'er the shelf
Of the brown rock. I know that island-speck
Of giant columns, heaving like the wreck
Of some submerged cathedral of past ages,
Which had gone down into the deep and left
Its organ-pipes still standing, all their music
Buried for ever, while, around the ruin,
The mocking waves roll their unfeeling jar.
I've walked the mist-swept moorlands which the bard
Has peopled with the fables of the past,
Where Fingal's sword once gleamed, and Ossian's voice
Threw far its broken notes upon the wind ;
To polished ages sending down the bold
Unchiselled verses of the olden day ;—
Where streamy Carum rolls in joy, and where
The trembling dweller of the rock took up
His harp, to sing of coming war and death,
The haunts of mystery where the shrieking gale
Scatters the waves o'er the white sands of Mora.
 ' Men scorn the bareness of a land like this,
And sing of the gay garden-vales afar
Where flowers send up their thrilling scent, like song.

They say the heath is our sole garden flower,
Varied sometimes by thistle and by thorn.
So be it : yet it is this ruggedness
That has so marked and shapen us, engraving
Its own peculiar impress on our foreheads,
Moulding our mien, our song, our history.
The step of mountaineers is always graceful,
The soul of mountaineers is always free,
The song of mountaineers is always clear.

‘Such is the land I’ve looked on : it is fair ;
None seemeth fairer to my eye than this
But what of all its beauty, set beside
The glory of the realm surpassing thought ;
Realm of the living and the holy, where
Of beauty the perfection dwells, fit realm
For perfect and immortal eyes to gaze upon.

‘Into that land the wanderer now has gone
(I said within myself) ; out of this cold
He has gone up to where no winter comes.
Sickness is changed into eternal health ;
The child of day has reached the light at last.
I wished him joy that night, and only sighed
Because I could not follow him ; for now
The icy blast blew keener, and the snow
Smote me on every side, and blocked my way,
Waking me up, from happy reverie,
To the sad consciousness that I was still
On this side of the City, many a mile
Between me and that gate across whose threshold
The shade of death has never once been thrown.

‘ Death, how I hate you ! foe of man and God,
First-fruit of sin and old ally of hell ;
Breaker of human hearts, and poisoner
Of earthly peace ; unseen, but mightier
Than all that’s visible ; linked with no clime
Or age, but claiming all ; who enterest
With ease where armies cannot force their way,
Mocking the barrèd fort ; whose foremost joy
Is to lay desolate our hearths and homes,
To break the links of love and rend in twain
All that we call the indissoluble here :
To fill this soil with graves, and spread above them
The smiling turf to cover thy misdeeds,
Rearing the stone to bid it tell how much
Of lost affection thou hast buried there.
Death ! how we loathe thee ; even when thy sting
Has been plucked out ; and how we daily long
Impatient, yet in hope, for the glad day
When, for the havoc thou hast wrought on earth,
The unrepented slaughter of His Saints,
God shall Himself arise to spoil the spoiler,
And pour His righteous vengeance on thy head !
All nature hateth thee, dark sorcerer,
Under whose venomous spell her beauty pales.
Thy curse is upon her ; her curse on thee :
Which shall prevail at last she knows, and thou
Knowest right well ; O thou who hast so long
Into corruption turned her comeliness !
Beneath thy wanton touch her blossoms die,
Shape, scent, and hue all smitten by thy breath.
Thy rude remorseless hand shakes down her strength ;

Thy leaden look maketh her fair cheek wan,
To ashes turns her glory, brings to dust
Her power and grandeur, so that all she was
Becomes as tho' it was not. Mighty death !
What sway is thine ; and yet that sway shall cease !
Thy sceptre shall be shivered, and thyself
Cast out for ever ; tho' creation's hope
Seems to have passed away, and dull despair
Crept over man. The inarticulate earth
Sobs, but no one regardeth, weepeth sore,
Like Rachel for her children ; but they come not,
And vain man tells her they shall never come.
Yet still she waiteth on ; her hills and vales
Are sighing for the day, when from above
The signal shall be given, and the great shout
Shall rise from the delivered earth and sea
Of victory won, and the long warfare o'er.

‘ Upon the battle-plain, where blood like streams
Moistened the soil, and bodies of the slain
Made rich the barren dust, there spring bright flowers,
Unseen before, turning the moorland waste
Into a garden ; so upon the soil
Of our dead joys, our slaughtered hopes, there rise
Flowers of unearthly loveliness, and trees
Of broadest shadow and of sweetest fruit.
We are enriched by death ; our highest life
Is cold corruption's offspring, and the grave
The parent of celestial fruitfulness.

‘ And need they then the gate and wall and tower,
These dwellers in the Salem that shall be ?

Not as we need them now; for then no foe
Assails; no fierce Assyrian more shall pitch
His tent before thee, city of the blest,
Or shake his spear against thy palaces.
No Gentile battle-axe shall ever hew
Thy rampart down, or thunder at its bars.
No Roman torch shall fire thy shrine, or light
Thy funeral pyre; no prophet, false or true,
Shall mount thy walls to warn of coming doom,
Or say, Flee out of her, her hour is come,
Her day of trouble and of treading down,
Her day of farewell and captivity.

‘All that is over: tears are wiped away:
Thy songs shall never cease; no night is thine;
No death can find its way into thy streets,
Or hang its drapery upon thy walls.
Thy joy is full; thy light shall never fade,
For the one Sun that cannot set has risen
Upon thee with its holy health and love.

‘Why need they then these gates, even tho’ of
pearl?

Not as they needed them of old, against
Assault of battle, but for beauty, as
The soul the body needs, the stars the blue
In which their light is set; not for defence,
But to enhance the splendour and the joy.

‘O ever-open gates, that without voice
Bid a perpetual welcome all around,
Beckoning the numbers without number in!
The city-gates of earth receive alike
The evil and the good; but ye the good

Admit alone into the unstained city ;
For nothing that defileth enters there.

‘ Ye silent hands and knees ; ye upturned eyes
Of the far-scattered family, who o’er
These frozen plains of earth are pressing on
To the one common home-land ; full of hope,
Yet pressed with burdens others know not of :
I think of you ! The sounds of revelry
Are all about you, for the inebriate world
Rests not, nor day nor night ! Its wassail-cup
Goes round the city, and its song is loud.
The notes that cheer you, children of the light,
Come from afar. How sweetly do they steal
In on the ruffled spirit, like night odour
From gardens all in bloom, that floateth up,
And sweetly thro’ the cool, calm darkness breathes
Into the chamber, where, in weariness,
Fever lies tossing on its burning bed.

‘ But now I quit this rocky resting-place,
Where I have lain, unmindful of the hours,
Which like so many dreams have come and gone ;
And take my onward way, to tend my flock,
Sore needing all the watchfulness and love
That a poor earthly shepherd can bestow :
And as I go, I sing the ancient hymn,
To shepherds first the heavenly Shepherd came ;
Or muse upon the Church’s old refrain,
The Lamb redeems the sheep ; and call to mind

The old father's words, just such as suit me now,
Feeding their sheep they found the Lamb of God.

“Only a shepherd,” said I to myself,
As I moved onward ; “not a priest am I ;
Yet of the royal priesthood I am part.”
I wear no ephod, and I shed no blood ;
No incense and no censer do I bear :
'Tis not with fire and ashes that I deal ;
These hands no victim bind, and lift no knife
To slay the unblemished lamb at morn or even.
The sacrifice, with which I daily deal
For others and myself, is past and done :
I cannot add aught to its potency.
'Tis once for all ; no poor unfinished rite
That needs to be repeated day by day.
It had what I have not, and what my doings
Can never have,—perfection infinite ;
And that prevails for me ; in it I stand,
Received of God, because of that pure life,
And that great death accepted in my name.
I do not eat the holy presence-bread,
Yet have I bread to eat which others know not,—
The bread of God which giveth dead men life,
Celestial fruit that maketh sick men whole,
And nourishes the living in this land
Of mortal famine ; better far to me
Than angel-viands, the eternal bread
Divine and true, the soul-sustaining wine,
From a celestial banquet, ever new.
I do not stand without, as one in dread,
Nor gaze with awe upon an unrent veil,

Or sword of fire that threatens death to me
If I go in to worship. Nothing now
Of danger or of distance or of death !

‘ I do not come to sacrifice, nor raise
Anew an altar that has passed away.
And yet I come with blessing and with peace
From priestly hands, resistless in their power,
Able to cope with evil at its worst,
To pluck from the world’s heart its sharpest thorn,
Whitening its reddest stains, eradicating
Each root and tendril of envenomed ill,
More than restoring the long-banished joy.
Then shall be joy, the joy of sorrow past
And evil days all done ; of ended toil,
And well-rewarded watching here, the joy
Of the great gathering of the scattered flock
To the one fold by the one door, when He
Of the sharp sickle and the golden crown
Shall come to reap the harvest of the ages !

‘ It shall be morning then ! The morn of morns,
On the long slopes of the eternal hills !
The sun that bringeth undecaying health
To a sick world shall rise ; the stars depart,
Unneeded then. And with that dawn shall come
All the good things that morning brings with it,
Light, song, and gladness for the sons of men.
Unbar the gate of morning ! Let it fly
Wide open with its amber and its gold.

‘ I do not see the end, and yet it comes :
I see no change in seasons or in years.
They keep their time, unhastened and unstaid

By human changes : just what summer was
Two thousand years ago is summer now.
The fields put on their green as May returns,
And the flowers know their months ; the wind takes up
Its summer-harp, and thro' the long rich day
Pours its new melody in concert with
The carol of the streams, the mirth of waves,
The joy of blossoms ; and the ancient sun
Shines as at first, taking his well-known place
Each morn, still fair and young, and undiscoloured
By the smoke-taints that stain our thickened air.
No poorer are the stars with their long years
Of liberal lending to a needy earth :
In orbit, motion, sparkle, still the same
As when they burst upon the new-made globe.
All things continue as they were, above,
Below ; and look as if no change could come,
No law of nature suffer a reverse.

‘ But yet we know the past is not the future,
And God does not repeat Himself ; we may
Be nearer the grand conflict than appears,—
The final battle between ill and good
That shall decide this planet's destiny.
Let it make haste ; it shall be welcome ; not
For its own self, but for the peace it brings,
The victory in which the spoiler shall
Be spoiled, his weapons broken, and himself
Bound in eternal chains, by Him who came
To fight our battle here, and to undo
Our evil and to conquer earth for man.

‘ What on its surface, or in secret depths

Of its infinity, space may contain,
Of dormant treasure and unquickened good,
Yet to arise and visit its vast realms,
We know not now. But if six thousand years
Have in this one small sphere uncovered stores
So measureless, what may we look for, when
The ages of the ages shall reveal
Their still unripened hoards, their untouched mines,
Their depths to which no plummet has gone down !
What unimagined harvests may we not
Reap from the seed sown for the universe,
In this rough outfield of our barren earth,
Where the eternal Word took flesh and lived ;
Where the eternal Son bore sin and died ;
From which, in His own body, He has carried
Up to the throne our very dust, a pledge
Of all things glorious to be done and seen,
Not here alone, but thro' creation, when
The day of the deliverance shall dawn !

‘ O heaven and earth, who fathoms your profound ?
All that we know of you is as a leaf
From some interminable forest-waste.
O time and space, who knoweth what ye are ?
We see above us the unmoving vault
Studded with gems. But what are ye ? And whence
Come ye, or into what do ye move on ?
Around what centre do your orbs revolve ?
Where are your temples and your palaces ?
Or to what hill of worship do your tribes
Go up, to sing the universal song ?
Ye speak to us of things beyond what eye

Hath seen, the unbeginning and unending.
In you we are be-misted ; not a trace
Of footsteps, save the few around our tents ;
All beyond these is solitude and awe.
That star-beach, which men call the Milky Way,
From what invisible sea hath it rolled in ?
That radiant arrow, light zodiacal
They name it, from what quiver hath it come ?

‘Sorely and long has this sick world of ours
Needed a healer ; for her wounds are deep,
And they who bind them up but mock her pain.
Her fever runneth high ; and yet she says,
“My brain is tranquil, and my eye is clear ;
There is no riot in this peaceful pulse :
I need no healing, save that which has come
From the old tree of knowledge, on whose fruit
The race has fed, and, feeding, has outgrown
Its infancy, becoming nobly wise.
Man is his own Messiah, and shall soon
Bring all things under his self-potent sway.
Judge of what God has spoken, or should speak,
Why should he not be God, if not to others,
At least to his own self ? Why should he not
Discern all things, the evil and the good ?
Why should he not defy both pain and death,
And be himself the judge of wrong and right,
Untrammelled by exterior law in aught ;
Uncircumscribed in liberty or thought
By writ or rescript, human or divine ;
Unchallenged in his claims to disbelieve
Or to believe what seemeth best to him ?”

‘ Man thinks, and toils, and reasons, but the race
Reaches no higher level : sword and science
Have done their utmost, but the world is not
At rest : philosophy looks round and wonders ;
The orator, with open palm persuading,
Or with clenched hand denouncing, does his work ;
But the deep seat of evil is unreached :
The statesman marvels at the helplessness
Alike of steel and gold, and asketh why
It is so difficult to minister
Justice and order. Human voices speak
Nobly and well, but ever speak in vain ;
They all are but the signals of distress,
The rockets fired at sea to call for help,
Which none can give, for each man needs the same,
‘ And still the wound remains unprobed, uncured ;
The head still acheth, and the fever rages ;
A few years turn the golden head to grey ;
The sick-bed tosses, and the lazarus
Still moans ; man maketh war with death,
But death takes no alarm ; it holds its own,
Unslackened in its enmity or power,
Pressing to every lip with pitiless hand
The mortal aconite, whose silent drop,
Falling alike on age and infancy,
Dissolves the link between the visible
And the unseen of this compounded frame,
Expels the soul, and leaves the body dust,
Filling the mould with graves, the air with sighs ;
Living and dead alike the witnesses
Of a malignant foe, whose mastery

No skill can baffle, and no strength disarm.
Man girdeth on his armour for the war,
But takes the field in vain : unarmed or armed,
Wary or rash, the issue is the same ;
He fights a foe that never lost a field,
Nor shall, till the long-promised Conqueror comes.
Then life resumes its glory ; this dull dust,
Like morning, sparkles into loveliness
Brighter than what it lost when it lay down.
Ah ! love, and light, and peace, long banished hence,
Return again and fill this vacant earth,
Which long has missed your presence, and has sighed
For your return and stay ; when shall we have
Your rainbow-visits, then no longer brief,
Or marked by clouds, but as the ages long,
And numerous as the happy hours of day ?

‘ Nothing is lost of good that ever moved
Across the face of this tenacious earth,
Which, with most jealous grasp, like miser’s, holds,
Unseen, unfelt, the imperishable life
Which once it nourished ; and the light of ages
Is stored for coming ages, purged and winnowed
From all depraving grossness, and all leaven
Of mutinous evil such as taints it now.
No failure more in creaturehood ; the height
Is reached ; descent becomes impossible.
Then the “ Survival of the fittest ” comes ;
But He alone selects the fittest who
Made every atom, moveth every star,
Giving to each its proper law of being.

‘ We wrong creation and we wrong ourselves :

Our masters are within us ; we are not
The freemen that we think ; we do not see
Our bonds and scourges, but the tyranny
Is not the less disastrous. Freedom comes
All from without ; the law of liberty
Owneth a gravitation not of earth.
The law of life, and progress, and ascent,
Is something which we only guess at here.
Evil is bondage, and it works by law ;
By law alone, then, can it be annulled,
And man made master of himself once more.

‘ Age rolls on age, and all are big with meaning ;
Each era has its thought, or great or small,
Or false or true, and the thought marks the age.
We know some by their songs, and others by
Their silence ; others by their storm and cloud ;
Few by their sunshine, for the age of sunshine
Is yet to come,—end of eclipse and gloom,
End of all failure and all feebleness,
Of misplaced purposes and wasted lives ;
When retrogression shall be known no more,
But all be progress, ever on and up,
To levels higher than all science dreams.
Dawns the fair day of knowledge when we pluck
The unforbidden tree, and are made wise,
When holy rule knits the whole world in one,
And the true comity of nations comes,—
One throne, one brotherhood, and God Himself
Leading the glory of unfolding life,
Throughout the expanding universe of joy,
The first, the last, the all of space and time.

The potency of sin has been unveiled ;
The cancerous taint, the deep and terrible
Evil of evil, has through ages dark
Been brought to view, and the one cure of all,
Resistless and enduring, now is found.
Health of the world, thou everlasting cross !
Diffuse thy balm, and bid humanity
Sit down beneath thy shadow, there to rest,
Safe from the tempter and his subtle snare,
Beyond the dread of ill. The years of peril
Have not been few ; often has hope's fond
finger

Been pointed to some gleam between the clouds ;
And oft the cheated heart has gaily said,
But said in vain, The promised calm has come !

‘ Yet not in darkness do we worship here,
Nor bow before an unknown God. The night
Of signs is passed : God dwelleth not in symbols,
Nor hides Himself in altars ; the red smoke
Of sacrificial fire has cleared away,
And shadows only blind, misteach, ensnare ;
Our eyes and ears do but betray our souls ;
In hands of sensuous man, all symbolism
Or soon or late becomes idolatry.

‘ Thou unborn light, descending from above,
Making the dead alive, the prisoner free,
We bid thee welcome ! Light of charity,
Such as earth knows not of, nor yet has seen,
Full-beaming in the face of Him who is
The world's one Light, break in upon
The ancient mists, and bring the blessed noon !

Hell cannot stay Thee in Thy radiant march,
Nor the deep grave bar Thy victorious way.

‘Love is not beauty, beauty is not love,
As some have taught ; yet both are linked together,
Mother and daughter, each her proper self,
And yet inseparable in their joy,
Like sun and summer ! Both I see afar,
Advancing hand in hand, ere long to fill
Alike the lower and the upper sphere
With the perfection they alone can give.
Life brightens with the brightness that is shed,
Not only from what has been, but from what
Is yet to be. Let the whole earth rejoice :
These are not clouds that hang above it, but
The avenue thro’ which we enter in
To light above all light, there to sit down
As sons of peace in peace’s inmost hall.
Thro’ these dim, winding ages of the mortal,
Life threads its way to that which cannot die.

‘As yet the time is not ; maturity
Of ill as well as good God waiteth for.
For unripe evil, just as unripe good,
He will not pluck ; ’tis ripeness that He deals with.
O deadly clusters of the poisoned vine,
When will ye ripen for the vintage ? When
Shall the dread voice, long listened for, be heard,—
The voice of Him who sitteth on the cloud ?
Thrust in Thy sickle, for the hour is come ;
Gather the clusters of the vine of earth
For the great wine-press of the wrath of God.
But meanwhile here we toss, and dream, and wake,

Like sick men ill at ease ; we would be gone ;—
But who shall lift us out of all this ill,
Loosing our bonds and bidding us go free ?
Upwards we cast our home-sick eyes, to see
If some stray angel, passing by, will not
Have pity on us, and remove us hence.
Wait, starlight, wait, we say, as we look out
On some dim dawn after a broken night ;—
Wait, starlight, wait, tho' but for one brief hour ;
We will go with you, for our souls are sick
With the wild roar of this poor drunken earth.
We dread another day, with all the clamour
Which it will bring. Oh, wait and take us with you
Upon your beamy wings. Nearest and purest,
Thou gem of sweetness, star of holy dawn,
Let us go with thee, and it shall be well !
Thy city shall be ours, thy home our home,
Where we shall rest beyond this withering strife.
Nothing shall part us, sweetest star of heaven,
Half silver and half gold, fair dove of dawn !
Oh, take us with thee ; we have loved thee long,
And fain, fain would have been with thee ere now.
Canst thou not stoop to take us ? Or drop down
Some silver cord, strong with eternal light,
To lift us to your land of shadeless morn,
Where not a cloud obscures the jewelled azure ;
Where nothing dies, where nothing lives in vain ;
Where light is light, and love is without change ;
No hollow promises, nor fevered hands
Clasping love's hand in vain ; no pallid lips,
Pressed close together in the agony

Of farewells that send back the burning blood
Cold to the heart ; no disappointed faith,
Weary with waiting ; no red stains of sin
Falling upon us ; no foreboding dreams
Of what to-morrow may bring forth ; no fears
Of failure for ourselves or others then ;
No vessels, that once seemed at anchorage,
Slipped from their moorings to go down at sea ;
No pillaged derelicts, that once were barques
Of noble name and goodly freight, as if
Earth's mines had poured their riches into them :
No widow's wail nor orphan's sob is yonder ;
No piteous songs of madness or of grief ;
No care-begotten furrows of the brow
That should have been all marble in its smoothness ;
No midnight shadows, no disastrous stars
Darting their distant poison down on man ;
No splintering bolt of fire, no sullen surge
Of the sad ocean watching for its prey !

‘ Roll up, ye clouds, and let the sun burst thro’ !
Earth needs it all ! Too long have been the years
Of shade and frost. Dissolve the fixèd ice
That sits upon each mountain-top, and sends
Down on our valleys its benumbing chill.
One day of that deep sunshine will undo
Dark years of frost. Draw up these mists, O sun,
That drench us with their cold, unmeaning spray,
And clear the troubled air of sighs and dreams ;
Breathe lovingly, thou balmy breeze of dawn,
Shake the last rain-drops from the forest-boughs ;
Raise the crushed violets, which the heavy foot

Of the hard hurricane had trodden down ;
Swell out, O voice of the expanding song ;
Into one holy concord gather up
The squandered melodies of time, supplant
The jar of ages, strike the unknown chord ;
Still the world's wild waltz-music,—siren-sweet
And quick with sudden fire to kindle up
All youth's warm blood into the fever-heat
Of passion, with its too delicious thrill.

‘ Swing the great censer ; let the holy fire
Evoke the fragrance, scattering healthful balm
From hands that knew no sin, and from a shrine
Into which evil never found its way.
Creation waiteth for the healing breath
Of Him from whom all sickness flees, whose cross
Struck into earth's dark soil shall be the cure
For all creation's ills, tho' planted there
By hands of men who knew not what they did,
Nor how from it a purged world should rise.

‘ Roll out, ye incense-wreaths, diffuse your sweetness ;
Do battle with the curse, and overcome it ;
Wipe off each trace of the old serpent's slime ;
Revivify the blasted wastes of death ;
Bring back to sea and air their primal calm !
Man has been struggling with this froward clay
For ages, but has failed ; its barrenness
Defies his skill and toil. O priestly breath
Of One more potent than a child of sin,
Go forth and do thy work upon this earth !
Clothing with gladness the desponding hills,
And disinfecting this hot atmosphere,

Tainted for ages with the fetid breath
Of human sin. Call into vernal bloom
Nature's long-budding beauty, checked and marred
With cruel frost, or seared into abortion
By suns too fierce to ripen or expand.

‘O sunny feast-days of the Church of God,
That with the happy seasons come and go,
Each with diffusive joy its glory shedding
On the low scenes of earth, and making bright
The gloom of common days ; when shall ye spread
Over creation all your mirth and beauty,
Lifting the low into the high, transfiguring
The meanest things that be to comeliness,
Such as ye only know, impregnating
The universal air with breath from Him
Whose breath is life, whose love the sacred light
That fills the holy city, and lights up
That hall wherein the one great feast is held,
In which shall end the festivals of time ?

‘ Draw bridle now ; the home-gate comes in view,
Quick lights are glancing from each window-pane,
The flag from the old turret signals peace,
And voices from within shout, Welcome home ! ’

THE END.

